

School of Theology at Claremont



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# JACK-KNIFE AND BRAMBLES.

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BY

ATTICUS G. HAYGOOD, SR.

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In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. (*St. John.*)

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## EXPLANATORY.

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WHAT is in this book has grown out of many fireside talks with young men of promise who, having heard many strange noises as of debate and doubt, have fallen into some perplexities about the foundations of their beliefs. Some of this class have come to the author because we were nearly on a level, except as age and experience gave him some advantage; neither having enough of what is called "learning" to trouble us, when once we truly found what we were talking about.

Christian people have had many fierce battles with unbelievers on questions very remote from Christianity; the unbeliever bombarding what he supposed to be the very citadel of faith and convinced that he was about to make an end of religion, because the believer, in the name of religion and with loyal purpose to save it alive in the earth, answered his guns with shot for shot, as if salvation depended upon the engagement. It would save ammunition, wear and tear of guns, loss of sleep, much disturbance of the nervous centers, if it could be made plain that, for the most part, these conflicts do not in the least involve Christianity itself; only some people's notions of it and, because theirs, fought for to the death: also some men's speculations about the origin of the universe and other such matters not revealed to man, and in themselves undiscoverable.

When a little boy—sometimes it seems as yesterday, sometimes so long ago—on the old farm, just outside the small village of Watkinsville, Ga. (without noise and flurry of railroad till 1888), where my parents lived plainly, honestly, religiously, in the fear of God and love of their neighbors, "Uncle Jim," the negro man of mighty muscle and good hard

sense—my loving and wise teacher in the lore of woods and streams—was told by my father one day to cut down a big gum tree on the edge of a little swamp; vast and mysterious to me, full of noises at dusk of frogs and owls, but terrifying to children.

How I did run when, returning from a rabbit hunt or fishing tramp—with the black dog “Rock,” faithful as Ulysses’ hound, for company—the path lay by the edge of the swamp!

The swamp was really a very small affair. Cleared up after a time and ditched, when I looked at the place where it had been, it seemed so little, but larger than ever when, grown taller, I followed the plow, persuading, with various arguments, a little mouse-colored mule, named “Beck,” who had truly a head of her own—throwing me backward or forward, according to her mood, when I tried to ride her; always coming to an immovable standstill when she heard the dinner horn, braying her response with notes whose tones abide in memory to this good day.

The imagination, as I learned in after years, has much to do with the size of swamps, whether of water and jungle, or sin and unbelief.

This note “Explanatory” began with the third person, let it go on with the first, or third, as it suits. What the trusted servant (half his time my nurse and playfellow in those years when the good doctors, having done to me all they could, thought the sickly child—held in this world by the prayers of those who loved him—would surely die) did first of all in getting that black gum down is worth considering.

With an old Jack-Knife—the best blade he ever had, he being judge, was forged in the village smithy—he began to cut among some canes growing thickly where he wanted to stand. Then he “tackled,” as he would say, some straggling brambles set with sharp, hooked, and cutting thorns. Lastly, with



much care, he removed some poison oak vines hugging tightly the body of the tree, bigger to my inexperienced eyes than Yosemite redwoods. Uncle Jim paid the penalty of such work, and got his hands well scratched and once cut with his own knife. When the cutting and slashing was done, with a forked stick—limb of dogwood cut from the hedgerow—he pitched canes, brambles, poison oak, with some weeds that were in the way, into a little pile, to be set fire to when it was dry, and so got rid of for good and all. Small opinion had this dark-skinned axman of gum trees (this one was cut for “truck wheels” for the benefit of a spotted bull calf—name of him “Cicero”—I had broken)—trees good neither for rails nor boards nor fuel. And small knowledge had he as to why they thrived best in swamps, nor had he reflected on the origin, heredity, or environment of canes, brambles, and poison oak. He knew these hinderers of his work when he saw them, and got them out of his way as best he could. When my Nestor—I was always with him when they would let me—got fairly under way, slashing and whacking about with his Jack-Knife, talking to the vines as if they were folks, I asked him: “What are you doing that for, Uncle Jim?”

Without looking round—his knife still going, he grunting as his manner was when pulling the blade through a tough and knotted vine—he answered: “To git ’em out er de way, Horse Fly [this was the pet name he gave the child he loved as his own life], so I kin git at de tree.” (*Tree of Life*).

It may be supposed there was nothing very artistic, scholarly, scientific, or dignified in the operation; nor did he have occasion for much learning. Upon occasion he had dignity in large measure: as when singing bass at a funeral, taking the “butt cut” at a big log rolling, or playing on his flute—he could have charmed Saul when the fit was on—or, in a fight, when his big fists cleared a space at a corn shucking. Nor did Uncle

Jim trouble himself as to the order of his clearing strokes; he cut at whatever was nearest and most in his way—stopping once to whet his knife on his big shoe and to cheer the dog in the swamp on a hunt of his own. It will hardly be imagined that while “Uncle Jim” was slashing with his home-made blade his mind was on the great implement factories or the “centers of opinion” concerning the use of them. With tougher things—the vines were much knotted together—he sometimes needed to make more than one pass with his old knife before he could clear them away.

Yet in after years, the child, forgetting his teacher’s lessons, nearly split his brain-box, his ax getting tangled in a muscadine vine just as he was giving it a wide swing for a lick that would tell.

It may be that some other than Uncle Jim could have done the humble job with more speed and grace, but he did the best he could with his implement. When it was all done we went to dinner and said no more about it.

Pausing at this place, I recall the scratches and the cut on Uncle Jim’s hands (the little red drops scaring me then; in after years war got people used to the sight of blood) that day he worked in the edge of a swamp. Considering now that the vines are so many and so tough, so thick and so thorny—poison oak among them also—I reflect upon the chances of fooling among them with only a Jack-Knife. If one only had thick gloves, or a patent, much improved brier-cutting tool with long handles, it would be more agreeable and the work would be more nicely done; also, with more safety.

If now—old Jim being in heaven as I verily believe—I can only cut away a few canes or brambles, even common weeds—above all, if possible to me, some of the poison oak clinging so tightly to the tree and so dangerous to naked hands—I will be happy indeed.

Then some of the younger men who have much heavy work

to do in swamps (calling for mighty thews as when the Mississippi bottoms were once subdued) may get some closer to the big tree—the real questions at issue—that not only invite, but demand their toils. With some brambles cut away they can see more clearly where to put their feet, avoiding moccasins and miry places; they may get a fairer lick at the tree; also danger of splitting their own precious skulls might be somewhat diminished.

Cutting away brambles with a Jack-Knife is not cutting down trees with a seven-pound ax, but the humbler work may be useful. Long time I have been thinking that some day I would try a little Jack-Knife work on some brambles, but there was not opportunity. Last winter, in Los Angeles the beautiful, health conditions—for the first time from the beginning in 1859—kept me out of the open field for two or three months. Elsewise the Jack-Knife would have been left in its place.

Those who have no need of clearing for their masterful ax-work (and there are many such axmen, not had in mind in this writing) will not buy this little book. If they should buy it by mistake, it is worth the price to them to have even this mild reassurance that they have no need of such humble clearing away of briars, brambles, and poison oak.

If any do need, it may help them, and helping them will be salve to scratched-up hands all sufficient.

If some careless ones get poison oak on their hands, it is the common risk of all work done in swamps, in which we must work, whether we like it or dislike it. (It is not simply "the truth" that "makes free;" it is what each one makes his own truth.)

These prefatory words are dated on the thirty-fourth anniversary of marriage with the itinerant's daughter, who has so long been a blessing to me and mine. THE AUTHOR.

Oxford, Ga., June 6, 1893. — *Emory College*,





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# JACK-KNIFE AND BRAMBLES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ROOTS AND STEMS.

PHILOLOGY has much to do with perturbations in theological orbits.

Not a few philologists, especially when they talk of theological matters, take it unkindly when others—knowing only something of their mother tongue—do not gratefully accept whatever they bring them. These worthies should cultivate patience, as their victims have had to do; they have had their say and will have it to the end. It is a way they have.

Many, otherwise rational men, are afraid to think when philologists speak; as some called preachers have shaking palsy when Herbert Spencer goes by—trembling and fearing exceedingly. Young men are often seized with these shakings—"buck agues," old hunters call them; also such as can believe nothing not affirmed by some noted man close by, or vouched for by some famous rabbi afar off. If the unknown approver

and arbiter of other men's beliefs in matters theological has a Dutch name hard of utterance, the consolation is great; as yesterday when the baby, scared by an exceedingly ugly poodle—eyes of him hid by forelocks—ran with loud cries to her grandmother, hiding her curly head in her lap.

Saddest of all are the modest and honest distresses of some of the best men in the world; faithful ones, who are doing the best work now going on under the sun. These men "lacked early opportunities" and were not "college bred;"—as if college *imprimatur* had not sent forth into the world some of the most arrant and pestilent heretics that ever plagued the Church of God, sowing devil's seed for truth. Such men have formed, in all honesty of spirit and loyalty to the truth, the habit of distrusting themselves even on subjects they perfectly understand, and in all sincerity have questioned their right to think at all where specialists simply announce their conclusions. Would to God this book might break a handcuff or two from the wrists of these honest men!

Let these sincere and godly men take heart, comfort, and courage. Their doubtings and fearings are most illogical. They proceed on the notion that he who assumes to know much or all



(nobody knows all of even a grain of sand or of a tadpole) about one thing must be able to think clearly and to judge truly of some other thing, although far away from the one thing he may know in part. Yet great linguists have believed in ghosts; while some scientists, as well as some theologians, have given in to "spirit rapping," "faith cure," "theosophy," or other idiocy.

It is against reason and experience that extreme specialists should be wise—people fit to follow as far as the spring branch—outside their little spheres. It is folly to expect knowledge, wisdom, and the judgments of common sense on subjects alien to their gifts and diverse from their lifelong and limited studies. One may know so much of one thing and in such a way as to know nothing of any other thing worth knowing. The specialist, confining himself for a lifetime to any one thing (the smaller and deader it is the worse for him), who has, at the end, so much as ordinary good sense about other subjects, is not uncommon.

This is as true of the theologian as of Oliver Wendell Holmes's entomologist, who began with natural science and specialized down to the beetle. Finding the field overlarge, he eliminated all beetles

but one—the commonest, humblest, most despised but most useful of the tribe. The “Poet at the Breakfast Table” affirms that the little man dried up more and more, and at last resembled the insect to whose ways he had given his life. The preacher who reads only technical, hard, tough, and dry books on theology—associating only with his own sort—will disqualify himself for preaching the gospel of Christ, which deals with the living and not the dead. It is a fixed opinion among old time Southern negroes that a cow fed on “fodder” alone will “go dry.”

It is conceivable, without mental strain, that a man may so confine and consecrate himself to the habits of a particular insect, or to the investigation of the forms of a few ancient and dead words, or the microscopic study of a particular microbe, that he would not know how to hitch a horse to a post. And yet such a man might take offense if one dared question his conclusions as to theology or his guesses as to the origin of the universe. Such a specialist a man of common sense might respect for his domestic virtues, and even for his peculiar learning. (The author’s wife sets great store by a little cactus because it is rare and ugly.) But a plain man would not consult such a specialist in a horse trade, much less hire him for a

“trainer.” Yet he is expected to follow him when he talks of theology! All this is no reflection upon the specialist in his specialty; it only raises honest doubt as to his omniscience and questions his fitness as an authority in religion.

It is peculiar and well worth considering that it is in theology alone that specialists in other lines consider themselves more capable of forming final judgments than men of equal gifts who have given their lives to it. As a rule entomologists do not dogmatize about political economy, nor do philologists contend with experts in science about the laws of chemical action or combinations. Rufus Choate was a great lawyer, but he would not have undertaken a capital operation in surgery. It is conceivable that a little lawyer might have braced himself for the task. Yet some philologists, who really know only the forms of dead words, attempt to settle offhand important and fundamental questions in theology. There are few braver men.

It has come to pass in matters concerning religion—whether of doctrine or worship-modes—that many suppose debates may be settled by getting down to the utmost root and rootlets of words used by Bible writers to tell us God’s thoughts and will concerning man. When a spectacted

scholar in dead languages only, with a very long or difficult foreign name, comes to us with his arms full of very dry roots of words, intermingled with frost-bitten stems of words, a plain man unskilled in mummies, whether of dead bodies or dead words, is prone to feel like a fool when, even in secret thought, he hesitates to accept, with a bow betokening both gratitude and submission, the notions announced by the submission-compelling philologist. In such a case the rootologist is very sure that the doubter is a fool, and upon occasion is free to intimate his opinion. "Philologist" is a big word; sometimes over-large for the man behind it.

Suppose we wish to get at the very heart sense of the Scriptures—the Old or the New Testament. Can this be best done, or done at all, by digging after and tracing to their tips the very first roots from which our revealing word sprang some thousands of years ago? Not in the least. If exposition depends on root digging only, we will doubtless get ideas, but false ones.

Of these ancient words the meanings were small and narrow as the life out of which they were evolved. The sense these words expressed before God used them for the purpose of inspiration was as to things religious most meager, low



and false as the idolatries of the people who employed them for such ideas as they had.

Mere words, at their best, cannot adequately express thoughts that take hold on infinite things—essences, principles, truths; let one use which term suits him. Least of all can the first use of a word express a truth not then in human thought. It was made for a different purpose; it cannot at first fit the new sense.

The first meaning of a word was “of the earth, earthy.” There were not many words at the beginning; the first men had more ideas than words, and finding new and fit words for expression was itself a great training to savage people. Experience bred ideas faster than it made words, and ancient men had to twist about the few they had to do service for many and variant thoughts—a necessity still pressing upon all who really think; the difference being that now we have many more words than clear-cut ideas and our training is largely in selection—a compensation for word plethora not fully appreciated.

There was spoken long before there was written language—whether with crude hieroglyphics, or Phœnician letters. History speaks of the invention of letters, not of words. Ages before Genesis, in which wonderful little book we find the first

record of revelation and all we know of one-third of the generally accepted period of human history, men were exchanging ideas about such things as they knew or imagined. When God spoke to them he used of their necessity the language they had; making the best of it possible, to teach them not all truth about anything, but soul-saving truth about religion.

The Bible nowhere professes to reveal all truth about anything; not even about God. It is not a universal history any more than it is a treatise on chronology, chemistry, geology, astronomy, or any other science or art. It reveals man to himself, God to man, and shows man how to be saved—that is, how to be a man.

For this divine purpose in revelation language was, of necessity, insufficient. It had been used, most or all of it, for the little commonplace ideas of everyday life—spent chiefly in getting something to eat. The words the first men used, and that therefore God could use in teaching them divine things, were of the woods, the fields, the sheepfolds, the vineyards, the fishing boats, the rude implements of their primitive industries, the market place, the hut, the cave dwelling; true home there was none. Revelation gave to men thousands of new ideas; we may be sure not one

new word. This divine inflow of great and holy thoughts put a strain on language greater than it could bear. The "old bottles" could not contain the "new wine" of truth; new ones were made for it by finding new words and giving richer and fuller sense to the old.

We will not, by any depth or painstaking in digging for the roots of ancient words, find out just what the shepherds, hunters, fishermen, farmers, warriors—plain men and women all, ill-informed, undeveloped, and very ignorant—meant by their use of a word, whether in their business, their pleasures, or their worship; for conditions so altered before there was written language that the meanings were modified or utterly changed. What an ancient man meant by his word for fishing before and after the invention of nets could not have been the same. So of all words; life and experience put new meanings into them.

If we cannot from the oldest root of a word tell exactly what a man once and first meant by it in his thinking, much less can this ancient root tell us what God meant by the word in his use of it. Revelation put new and richest meanings into words; else revelation itself had been "a work of supererogation."

Agassiz could draw a fish by studying one

scale of him, as Cuvier could reconstruct, in plaster, an extinct mastodon by observing his toe-joint or other remnants of him, even a tailpiece. But philosophers, theologians, least of all mere philologists, cannot construct a Christian conception of God from the study—during Methuselah lifetimes—of all ancient words put together, or fix to our satisfaction the sense these words bore to heathen ears before God used them to reveal his will to men. The thought we now seek was not in these words, and could not be till God enlarged and ennobled them for the truth he gave to his children.

We may indeed, by such studies, find out what were the heathen and false notions of God, but no conception of our Creator and Father that need concern us for a moment. It is only the Christian conception of God that we need care for; every other, whether ancient or modern, is unworthy and false. In what the Christian's God teaches the whole world to-day finds its ultimate tests of rights and wrongs. Humanity can have no interest in a God teaching less than the highest and best.

The words "philologist," "Egyptologist," "Assyriologist," and such like have an impressive look, while the sound of them indicates vast stores of mysterious knowledge—which it might

be almost a sin to doubt. But no genius, no exact knowledge can get out of a word what was never in it—what never could be in it—while it was yet alive. Nor can there be any process for squeezing out of the long dead and very dry roots of ancient words any worthy conception of religion or of anything that concerns religion. Not even hydraulic press power can squeeze sugar out of a heap of crushed cane, lying in all weathers for a season or two; but very little pressure will start copious ooze of sour rain water.

Philology has wrought wonders in its own line of things and deserves all honor. It has made not only important but necessary contributions to Bible study. But oftentimes it puts on unwarranted airs, as if theology absolutely depended upon its technique with ancient words. In this notion is a sort of folly of which the worthy scholars in consideration do not seem to be conscious. They should know their place as well as their work. The safe combination being lost, Tiffany might need a locksmith to open the treasure vaults; yet lock openers may not be experts in the qualities and values of gems and precious stones. And their ignorance of what they have not studied does not discredit them till they set up to be masters where they are of necessity uninformed.

Translation and interpretation are not identical processes; one may be an admirable translator, but a most unreliable expounder. He who knows most of the heathen use of a word is not thereby best fitted to interpret its Christian sense—and this is the only sense Bible students are seeking—locked up in it where we find it in the Scriptures. If he knows only the heathen and pre-Christian sense of a word used in the Bible, the mere philologist cannot give its Christian sense at all.

It is not hard to understand why so many German commentaries make chaos of history, philology, metaphysics, ethics, and religion, when undertaking with such apparatus as they use to tell the people who know what religion is, what the Bible means.

Trustworthy interpretation of Scripture depends more upon knowing the spirit of truth and living under the law of it, the Holy Ghost helping the earnest seeker, than upon accurate knowledge, if there were such knowledge, of the first meanings of the words that were used to convey divine thoughts to men. Many an old woman, "dwelling in the secret place of the Most High," poring prayerfully and lovingly over her Bible in the one tongue she knows, understands the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of the two

sons, and all the deepest and most precious words of Jesus, far better than half the word-exegetes quoted in that *omnium gatherum* of interpretation, "Lange's Commentaries;" better than scores of world-famous men, who have read these passages in a dozen languages.

That such a woman should be learned in Bible truth, her soul rejoicing in its marrow and fatness, though unlearned in language, should not surprise us. The night before his passion, Jesus said to his disciples: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Some, trusting to learning, have not considered that Jesus really meant anything by these words; others, despising learning, have read into these words a fanatical sense, as if our Lord had promised inspiration to his people through the ages. One is the variety of learning not deep enough to be humble; the other, the folly of ignorance so deep that it does not know itself. The Spirit was promised to help us understand the teachings of Jesus; not through us to give the world new revelations. This fanaticism of a sort of nineteenth century inspiration, is a grievous and sinful abuse



of our Lord's gracious promise of the ever-abiding, enlightening, and sanctifying Spirit, and close kin to the folly of those who presume to get their doctrine out of what they suppose is their experience.

There is no surer sign that one is parting company with Jesus Christ than when he sets up to teach for truth what the Master did not teach; to call things evil that he did not call evil, or good that he did not call good. He who sets up an intellectual workshop for the manufacture of factitious virtues and factitious sins is a living menace to the religion of Jesus Christ.

For further illustration: If one would get the innermost meaning of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, he must know a great deal more than classic Greek, and he must be able to dig for other things than the roots of Greek words. Taken singly, words amount to little; their meaning is largely, sometimes wholly, determined by their place in a combination of words that make a statement; sometimes in a combination of statements that make an argument.

Among the weakest expounders of St. Paul's thought was a philologist indeed; a man who could harangue a Greek mob in the time of Demosthenes, sing bass in a Greek chorus, or with

equal facility, and more interest to himself, discuss the livelong day, roots, stems, forms, accents, breathings, pronunciations, idioms, and versions. He could more than have held his own with the lop-sided German professor who devoted his life to the "definite article," regretting with his dying breath that he had not "confined himself to the dative case." Pity he did not, for all the good such a man can do for searchers after living truth.

A book in capable hands does not suffer as much by translation as some think who tell us with a very fine air that they "only read books in the original," as if they did not translate to themselves. Yet a preacher who had "picked up" some Greek has been known to read a lesson to a congregation of factory people from "his Greek Testament," translating as he went along! Inadequate for him all the versions. Few things can sustain a man in such a rôle; conceit, when it is perfect, if reënforced by ignorance, is equal to it.

God intended the Bible to be translated into all the babbling tongues of earth. It undoubtedly bears translation better than any other book in the world; for there is more in it important to men and normal to human intuition than in all other books put together. It is a book for all times and countries. It is not of local or temporary signifi-

cance: "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation."

Certainly when the Bible is received and accepted it carries its true sense; for it yields the same fruitage in every language of men.

There was a Chinese mandarin who read the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, Chinese being the one language he knew. Meeting the missionary who gave him the book, he forthwith charged him with falsehood: "You said this was written eighteen hundred years ago. This is not true. You wrote it after you had lived here and found out our people. This book tells exactly what they are."

An apostle wrote what explains the mandarin's perplexity: "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

## CHAPTER II.

### STOCKS AND GRAFTS.

WHAT comes of grafting has not been sufficiently considered by experts in the history and primary meaning of words; spoken a thousand or many times a thousand years before Christ came, and to ordinary uses now dead—their first meanings changed and, as to many, evaporated out of them long ago. Most heathen words, as trees and animals, had to be tamed and trained before they could be useful to civilized and Christian life and thought.

How great the difference! Here is the vegetable—it should now be classed among fruits—that we call “tomato.” In our time we have seen the useless little round thing children played with and that our fathers and mothers called “love apples” (a bunch of them, full of the pretty red balls, about the size of the “middle man” in our marble games, grew at grandfather’s, near “Mossy Creek Camp Ground,” in old Habersham County, Ga., close to the back steps of his humble log cabin, to the right going out, last seen in 1844) so tamed and developed that it is no longer a wild thing,

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struggling with bad "heredity" and unfriendly "environment," but a luscious and wholesome fruit, food for man. What idea of the fruit, as we know it now, would one get of a great prize tomato, like these Californians—weighing a pound—from some man of grandfather's time who should tell what "love apples" were sixty years ago? If it were six thousand years ago? In that time only God has remained changeless; the very names given to Him have so changed and grown in meaning that the first meaning would now mislead us.

The author protests his reverential respect for philologists in matters philological. But in the nature of things one who has exhausted time, strength, and life on the ancient roots of very old words is not the best expounder to tell us what a word now grown to be a tree, full of foliage, blossoms, and fruit (like that glorious orange tree flashing, in the light of the sun just rising, its green and white and golden splendors through the window there), may signify to a Christian, seeking to find what truth God means to reveal by it to the worshipful and loving soul of his child. Nor can the man of all scholars most learned in language find the Christian meaning by tracing its untamed and heathen use and sense through every ancient

writer who ever lived. The open sense, the ready mind, the eager heart, the praying spirit—these are more necessary to exposition than grammars, lexicons, and citations.

If a hungry soul, longing for “the bread of life” and coming to the Word of God to get it, must first go down through two thousand or twice two thousand years, root digging to find first of all its ancient heathen meaning, or must get some expert miner for dead and buried things to exhume it for him and bring it to the light of day from its deep grave—under thicker *débris* of perished things long turned to dust than hid Troy from Schleimann’s pick and shovel—he is in a sad case indeed. At best he is only a sort of exegetical Digger Indian—grinding acorns and roots together for a miserable meal, whether raw or cooked.

Christian thought has been “grafted on” these untamed heathen words, and, as when tame and sweet oranges are grafted on wild and sour ones, the meaning, outcome, and precious fruit are determined by the graft and not by the stock. Why the ripe and delightful orange takes after the graft and not the root, no naturalist can tell. But it is matter of fact indisputable, albeit it seems that things ought to go the other way.

That some eccentric people may prefer examin-

ing with microscopes the roots of wild and sour trees, even the mere forms and skeletons of sour trees, dead ages ago, to eating the best orange in Florida, is conceivable. Men do as silly things day by day; spending their lives so they call it "research;" the fruitage of it they name "learning!" They are linguistic sextons, digging about in old graveyards, with small chance of finding even "poor Yorick's skull."

But if an orange grower should fling away his grafts and buds, taken from the best sweet trees, because some expert in the dead roots of wild ones, standing in the shadow of a mighty name for the piddling he calls research, should say to him, "See here, my friend, those grafts will not yield sweet oranges; the root, not the graft, determines the quality of the fruit," he would indeed show a child's simple faith in rootology—big words stunning his brain like a blow from a sand bag—but he would not be considered by buyers or eaters of oranges. When philologists tell us about the heathen and pre-Christian use and meaning of words in interpreting the Book our heavenly Father has given us, we want them to consider the philosophy of "Stocks and Grafts." The human soul is very hungry for "the bread sent down from heaven;" is in sore



need of it, and must die without it. If it can get nothing better than the sense ancient idolaters put into their words when they talked of God and religion, it were as well to imitate foolish Ephraim and "feed upon the east wind;" or worse even, take for the gospel the exposition of our Lord's words as given by a German linguistic-rationalist, drawing pay as a theological professor!

Before Genesis there were words to express the notions savages like the Amalekites and semicivilized idolaters like the Egyptians had of the Creator and of worship; notions like the people who conceived and expressed them, necessarily most limited; brutal or dreamy, grotesque or sensual, anthropomorphic all—their gods like themselves and worse than they—horrible, cruel, murderous, and every one utterly false.

When we begin with Moses the story of the creation, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," are we to take our conception of the Almighty Creator, Ruler, Saviour, and Judge from the meaning the word rendered "God" is supposed to have borne to fierce Amalekites, to sensual Egyptians, or to Chaldean stargazers and fire-worshipers, before that God "called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees?"

Not so do we truly learn what the word Moses

uses for God meant to him, or what it means to us. If we knew just what men meant by it who used it before Moses, or if we go back very far and find the first root of it before the "Dispersion," when Noah's sons were getting ready to spread abroad through the earth and ask Shem, Ham, and Japheth what they meant by their word for God and they could tell us all they knew, all this would not answer our need, because it would not give us the truth.

Not so would we get any worthy conception of the Maker of the universe and of the Father of our souls. If we had a dissertation from Moses, giving us all that the word or words he used for God meant to him, we should find that his thought of Jehovah was so lofty as compared with the conceptions of Egypt and of other nations of his time, as to begin a new and noble chapter in the history of the human race, but it would not be enough; it took one "greater than Moses" to "show us God."

We will study the fruit that follows grafting and not the original wild stock on which the tree is still growing, to find out what a sweet orange is. One should not "shy" at the words "still growing" as a country colt takes fright at a baby carriage in the city, as if heresy were locked up in

them. For it is true that the more we study the Bible revelation of God, above all, the more we incarnate it ourselves, the more fully we understand God. Science has added no rays to the sun, but every day men of science show us how we may more perfectly use his light, that we may find out what is in the world he warms and blesses. So our greater light, the "Sun of Righteousness," gives us all by which we see in things spiritual and divine; but more and more may Christian faith discover the beauty, richness, goodness, and power to lift up and glorify the world, of the Day Star that shows us God. If we wish to know what the word "God," in the first verse of Genesis, should mean to us—and it ought to mean far more to us than to Moses (for we "seek not the living among the dead")—we must seek to understand far more than ancient usage. Among the most cheering words of Moses was the promise of a "teacher sent from God," "greater" than he had been. The full and high meaning of the word "God" in the first of Genesis is not in the tomb of dead words, but in the "Word made flesh and dwelling among us." We will find out what Jesus Christ meant when he spoke of God; above all we will find out Jesus himself: then we will read Genesis again. The God of whom Moses wrote is the

same Being revealed to us in the loving Father, giving warm welcome to the penitent prodigal; above all, manifested to us in the life and character of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of Mary.

It is better to read the New Testament first. The Being Jesus Christ revealed to us, when he "showed us the Father," is the Jehovah of the Old Testament, "of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." They "wrote" of God; they could not "show us the Father;" they were only men. But Jesus Christ, "the Only Begotten of the Father, he hath declared him."

If any, sages, historians, lawgivers, priests, prophets, psalmists, scientists, philosophers, philologists, or apostles, ever thought of God otherwise than Jesus Christ thinks of him, they thought wrong, and Christians, really "made free by the truth," will not have their thinking nor their meaning, but Christ's.

On the sunny hilltop where Jesus has planted the tree of faith, briars and brambles and poisonous vines do not grow; they thrive in swamp lands where unwise or conceited men delve about among mysteries of their own making, searching for secrets that lie beyond them and that do not concern them; hurting themselves and making mischief for others.

In the study of God and of revealed religion (and other studies have their noblest value as they aid us in this heavenly exploration), Egyptian papyri, Ninevite bricks, and Babylonian cylinders play a very small part—about as much as the myths of Isis, Osiris, Bel-Merodach, and the rest of their dirty gods; or as do the long dead roots of ancient heathen words. They may give us a hint as to what these idolatrous nations, which developed into bigness—not greatness—thought of their man-made gods; but their gods are as low down as themselves.

In the National Museum, City of Mexico, are many surpassingly ugly but very interesting expressions in monstrous stone carvings of ancient Aztec ideas of God and of man's relation to him. The word these image makers used for God no more expresses the truth than their hideous and grotesque carvings. The Aztec ideas, symbolized and articulated after a fashion in these stone images, are so crude that they are utterly obscure. We see dimly notions of a heartless power that would delight in the torture of its victims; a monstrous and devilish notion of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that some called theologians, borrowing their horrible ideas from paganism, have tried to read into the Holy Book itself,

and making a metaphysical digest of their own conceits, called it a "creed," which God's children must believe or die. Most monstrous blasphemy is such grafting of heathen lies upon the Word of God. But if we had in its completeness the Aztec thought in good honest English, it would serve no good purpose except to furnish another illustration of the world-old truth that man "by searching" cannot "find out" God.

What is true as to ancient heathen words for God is true, so far as Christian truth goes (and that is the truth we need care for; it alone makes men free), of their words for religion and for whatever closely concerns religion. Their ideas of religion were false and foolish, and if we use their words as they used them they will betray us. Philology may indeed tell us what ancient races meant by their word for God, but it cannot thereby give us a true idea of him. We must get that from Jesus Christ. The Christian use of a heathen word regenerates it; it is truly "born again." The new sense "transforms" the word; it is a true metamorphosis. As with a man "born of the Spirit" and "created anew in Christ Jesus," so with the Christianized word: "Behold, old things have passed away and all things have become new!" Yet men argue and quarrel in the heat of fierce

debate, making endless battle of tongues and pens, to tell us the very truth of Bible words by showing what the ancients, who knew not Christ, meant by them. Better ask Watt what he meant by a steam engine if we want a rational account of an improved Corliss. For example: Debaters undertake to settle questions of baptism by finding out what a heathen dyer, or other haberdashery man, meant by the word in his little business, whereas we only want to know what God meant by it in his business with our souls. How is an honest seeker after truth to find God, to find a Father in the Creator, a Friend in the Ruler of all things, a Saviour in the Judge of all worlds? Never from what worshipers of idols, from what the mad people, who bowed down before Moloch and Ashtoreth, meant by their use of a word, or root of a word, that stood for God. Never from what Egyptian, or Assyrian, or Greek, or Roman, or Hebrew before Moses's time meant by his word for God; any more than to-day we seek light from the folly or ignorance of any modern man who has not learned of Christ, be he infidel, Buddhist, agnostic, theosophist, or Congo negro.

. All this depends too much on the root digger, or notion maker. There is in neither of them revealing light. The man consecrated to ancient words



may himself mistake the meaning the wandering tribes before Moses or Abraham attached to their word for God. The philologist must get his notion at second hand as common mortals do (a matter he does not sufficiently consider); he was not there with them when the word was alive and active. But if we had their meaning with phonographic accuracy it would not help us; for their notion was as meager as they were and as low as their religion was debased.

In the nature of things mere words cannot define God. They are accessory to revelation; in a sense necessary to it; but words are like their makers, men, self-limited, not large enough for conceptions of infinite life and attributes. They must suggest to the imagination more than they can express; else mere words could measure God.

In ancient days Moses, as did all true prophets and teachers who went before or came after him, used words to tell men of God; but they knew, at least in part, how insufficient they were. To this day many have not found out the necessary limitations of words; they suppose they can compress religious truth and experience into formal definition, which such as have large views of doctrine, or depth of religious experience, do not attempt. Small spaces may be defined and the boundaries

marked by surveyors with their instruments; but if one would survey infinite space, where will he plant his "Jacob's staff?"

To help the word, as well as the hearer, the holy men of old, when teaching the people the truths of God and of religion, used many symbols to aid man's reason by giving wings to his imagination, that he might rise above the mere language-jungles in which he dwelt.

Before revelation, or without it, as do Bible rejecters to-day, men tried to think out God from what they saw in nature and were capable of in themselves. But nature cannot reveal God; no more can unaided reason discover him. Man's conception of God is like himself and his words are like his conception, limited, meager, misleading, false. Said Zophar, the Naamathite: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

If we really seek to know God, we will no more ask the dead words of ancient than the living words of modern idolaters; we will ask neither physics nor metaphysics. We will ask the God-man to tell us of Jehovah; only the God-man can

tell us, and he can do it because he is both "very God and very man." Of him we will learn what we need to know and what we are capable of knowing of "the God of our salvation."

As to other teachers and expounders, what they tell us that is in harmony with Christ's word we will joyfully accept; what they tell us that contradicts Christ we will utterly reject, knowing it to be false and no more representing God to us than Sir Edwin Arnold's fancies about the "lord Buddha" in "The Light of Asia."

"No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." How does Jesus Christ reveal God? He uses words, but he does not depend on them, old or new words, their wild or tame significance. Jesus defines neither God nor religion; for knowing God and religion perfectly, he knew that words, retaining in their very nature the limitations of their human origin, cannot express infinite facts or principles that take hold on infinite things. Men who truly know neither attempt to define both. Jesus never defined holiness, or love; he could not by words; he made plain by living what the words only suggested.

There is a story of some missionaries in Burmah

who had been "arguing" about holiness. One of them asked a little girl: "Do you know what holiness is?" The child, unspoiled by disputation and unwarped by pet theories to defend, gave answer: "O yes, sir; holiness is the way Mr. Wray lives." Mr. Wray was the best man she knew.

Jesus did not repudiate the "holy men of old who spake as they were moved of the Holy Ghost." All the truth they gave to men he built upon; lawgivers, heroes, reformers, historians, prophets, priests, psalmists, martyrs, and confessors had "prepared the way" for him, from righteous Abel to fiery John the Baptist.

"In the fullness of time;" at the right time, when the world was as ready for the Christ as it could be till he had come; in his perfect humanity and perfect Godhead he came. "Conceived of the Holy Ghost" and "born of a woman," his mission was to reveal man to himself and to show men God and the truth concerning God and man.

Jesus did not teach all the truth about God—we "cannot bear it now" while yet in the flesh—but all that concerns us now; our duty and our destiny, our salvation from sin and redemption from its curse. How did Jesus reveal man to man? Read the

Gospels; there is his blameless and useful life, type and ideal of perfect manhood. By him the world gauges goodness and determines character. How did he reveal God? Read the Gospels; listen to Christ's words; consider his works; observe his life; see him die, and we know how he "showed us the Father."

Are we now to turn away from the God-man, revealing man to man himself and showing God to be the real Father of the whole human race, and go to digging in the graves of dead nations to find from the roots of words, or the mere shapes of them (as different from the living thought of men as a fern leaf stamped on a piece of limestone is unlike the living beauty that waved to the winds ages ago), what ancient idol worshipers and men slayers thought of God? We answer with Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

The evening before he died on the cross—there also showing the Father to men—an apostle said to him: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Let us well consider our Lord's answer: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

When, turning away from Jesus, we seek to find the truth of God by philology, by science, by metaphysics, by any mere human gifts or arts, what shall we say to him when he asks us as he asked Philip: "How sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

## CHAPTER III.

### HURRYING ON TO ABRAHAM.

**I**F we judge the Bible by the method of the world's masters in literature, we will find that it is an ill-arranged collection of little books by many authors, in different periods of time and on a great variety of subjects. As a book it is condemned by the accepted canons of criticism. Only looking at its form, this book is fragmentary, also lacking in consecutiveness and unity. Its form is neither philosophical nor scientific. Had it been either philosophical or scientific, it would have failed of its purpose.

God reveals himself in nature, but he has not classified or labeled the works of his hands; beasts, birds, fishes, serpents, butterflies, with trees, flowers, and fruits of all sorts, are found living together in the same valleys and mountains. It is man's work to classify them if he wants to do it. So in the Bible we find the freedom of nature; most of it is utterly lacking in what scholars prize so much—logical arrangement. The most gifted writer could hardly discuss or relate important



matters after the Bible method and win even respectful attention.

Comparing the Bible with the world's other great books, it is strangely out of proportion. If the foremost thinker—philosopher, theologian, scientist—knew the real story of creation and of the origin of man, how big a book he would write in telling it! Yet hardly bigger than those some do write in telling us what they do not know, putting ingenious guesses where they need solid facts. The history of the work of earth-worms upon a little plot of ground has given us a notable and most instructive volume.

The writer of the book of Genesis evidently thought that there were vastly more important things to tell to men than the origin of the universe or even their own origin. The account of creation is dismissed in two short chapters; both of them would hardly fill a column in the morning paper. About half this brief outline sketch is taken up with the creation of man—"made in the image of God" his Father, and thus, in the first words of revelation, shown to be of more consequence in the thoughts, plans, and love of his Creator than all the worlds put together. What a temptation the writer of Genesis must have conquered (had he been like great sages and theologians mostly

writing their own thoughts) to discuss "the origin of evil" and give his explication of it! That he did not yield to the temptation is proof that he was not writing under the ordinary inspirations of authorship.

This writer is so different from ordinary thinkers that, in one short chapter, he tells the sad story of the fall of the first human pair—our father and mother after the flesh—without one word as to how sin got into a universe created by a good and holy God. An uninspired man could not have resisted the temptation to formulate and publish a theory of the introduction of moral evil into the universe.

Moses could not have resisted side tracking the great and simple story he tells, to get right of way for his speculations, had not the Spirit of wisdom and all grace held his mind to matters of real importance to mankind. Perhaps forty years' brooding over the deep and insolvable problems of existence (who knows but that he wrote the book of Job during that long exile with God?) when he had time and pause for reflection, while he kept Jethro's flock in the Midianitish wilderness, taught him what so many never learned: "The secret things belong unto the Lord God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to

our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

Suppose we had a full, minute, and final statement concerning “the secret things,” without those things the Bible does tell us, what would be left us? A curious volume, full on subjects the most remote from our real interests and silent on those that concern all that enters into life, death, and immortality. A useless book it would be; as ill-suited to us as if a farmer, sorely needing knowledge of soils and crops, fertilizers and seeds, agricultural implements and modes of cultivation, markets and prices, supply and demand, should receive a treatise giving him exact information as to the temperatures and seasons, the specific gravity and rate of motion of the big planet Jupiter, or a satisfactory account of the rings of Saturn.

Without a word of introduction the devil comes into view as the tempter and enemy of man. We have nothing about his antecedents, nor the least intimation as to when, where, or how Satan himself got to be evil. How the uncreated seed of evil originated the writer does not tell us; doubtless he did not know, and, what was of prime importance, knew that he did not know, although such a man must have puzzled over these questions till

for a time he forgot his sheep and could not “sleep of nights.” This clear-eyed, great-souled man was modestly silent where ordinary men vociferate their ignorant conceits, misnamed philosophy. Would to God he had more imitators!

Our intuitions—on such subjects better than all logic, stronger, truer, more clear-seeing—make it certain as an axiom that God did not create Satan as we meet him in the third chapter of Genesis, or in the book of Job, or in the Gospels, or in the Epistles, or in the Apocalypse. When we have finished the short story of the fall we simply know that the sinners—with whom we weep while condemning them—followed their free choice and broke the law without compulsion from without or within. Fate—which is purely a heathen idea, a mere notion and vagary of the brain, to which corresponds no actual force of any sort—played no part in this scene. Notions of fate and of necessity, of eternal decrees of reprobation and election, without reference to deeds done or lives lived, some theologians, confused with metaphysics, grafted on Christian doctrine, borrowing their philosophy, which furnished the molds for the shaping of their religious teaching, from Greek fatalists, thus giving a horrible and hateful gospel, according to Zeno. But the grafts are dying,

as trees do that will not live in unfriendly soil; little is now left but the shapes and names of them. Also the infinite evil they have wrought among men.

It soon becomes plain to us that the devil's motive in dealing with his consenting victims is hatred of God; a bitter and, in the long run, impotent revenge, seeking devilish satisfaction in the ruin of those the Creator took such pains with and loved so divinely.

As we read and ponder it begins to be equally clear that sin, to be guaged and judged first of all by man's relation to God, is an infinite evil, hateful to God and ruinous to man. We see that the Almighty Ruler, yet man's Father, must punish sinners, however much it hurts him to do it. And punishing a child of his—was not the prodigal among the swine also a son?—does wound with anguish inconceivable to us the compassionate heart of the eternal Father of men, who "is not willing that any should perish." What inspired writer taught that God cannot suffer? Jesus Christ did not teach such a pagan doctrine concerning God.

When we see the man and the woman, types of what we all are, driven out of their garden home, so fair and rich in all good things, and the angel

with the terrible "flaming sword" guarding its gate, we know, absolutely know, that it is all an infinite grief to God, who "takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked" children. If any suggest that these views are read into the history from the New Testament, the answer is easy: We are to read the Old Testament and interpret it in the light of the New. That is the only way to read it.

God did not torture this wretched man and his miserable wife. The idea of torture in the punishment of sin, such as is set forth in some world-famous pictures, by "masters," of hell and the judgment; is in its very conception a blasphemous libel upon the almighty Father. Such notions were never found in the Word of God; they were borrowed from ancient heathenism, from which so much else that is false in religious teaching has been borrowed.

As to some of these much-lauded paintings—fine drawing and fine coloring in them, no doubt!—considered as expositions of the Gospels, they are utterly, horribly, devilishly false. How could a painter, saturated with the notions and superstitions of Angelo's times, paint the gospel? When the Church was an organized inquisitor and tormentor?

And nowadays, if men fill their minds with the monstrous conceptions of heathenism as set forth by old Greek and Roman poets; if they get their doctrine of future punishment from Dante and Milton, they will, of necessity, leave the track of Christ's teaching on these stupendous questions. Certain it is that in all Christ's teaching is not one syllable that represents God as a tormentor. The Spanish Inquisition stood for that notion of punishment and was of Satan in all its parts. The devil would torture men to see them suffer; not the great and good God. An ordinarily good man could not do it. Whoever, write when and where he may, contradicts the teachings of Jesus Christ writes falsely.

We know as we read the brief and moving story of the fall and the expulsion that the caprice of power, that the heat of vengeance did not drive them away from the tree of life. God must punish sin, else the order of the universe is upset and man himself is undone. And we know (it does not take learning, only some true knowledge of God to be sure) that the man and his wife were barred from the tree of life more in mercy than in wrath; to "live forever" as they were, sin working in them the death of all worth living for, would have been a hell of inconceivable horrors:



a hell so horrible that God, in pity, could not suffer it. The ground was "cursed" "for his sake," not his torment.

If Jesus "wept over Jerusalem" in clear foresight of its impending desolation, so we know that the Creator and Father of men sorrowed, as only God can grieve, over his disobedient children, what time they went their way into a world whose soil bred "thorns and thistles" for him, and into conditions that held pain and sorrow for her.

Most notable and peculiar to itself is the Bible method with sin. It never discusses its origin. It makes plain what it is and points out in a thousand forms of statement the ruin it brings to man, and from beginning to end makes us see God's infinite longing and tireless effort to save him; yet leaving to every soul, vivid as lightning playing about mountain tops in a midnight tempest, the certain and terrible knowledge: Sin must be punished.

Jesus Christ, by whose teachings we test all moral truth wherever found, in the Bible or other books—the one Teacher of all the ages who understood anything of the entrance of sin into the universe, and who knew it all—says not one word on the subject. Jesus speaks of the end and not of the beginning of sin. He shows us what it is

and how to make an end of it. He teaches us how to get it out of our hearts and lives and so out of our destiny. Jesus thought it not worth while to explain the origin of evil; had it been good for us to know, he would have told us.

And it is not in the least worth while for mere men—how strong soever—to attack this problem. They cannot solve it; if they could, it would not help us out of our sins and miseries, else Jesus had solved it; not leaving it to logic choppers. Such able men as the “Theodicy” writers have no time to waste from teaching truth and doing good works. One clear-cut word on salvation is worth a thousand on the origin of evil. Nor is it worth while for us to bother our minds with what men, the ablest of titled scholars, write on this subject. We have not time; it were better to visit the poor; better even to feed the chickens. And it makes sensible people so tired!

The fifty-first Psalm—much more the fifteenth chapter of Luke—is worth infinitely more than all the “Theodicies” attempted since the human mind began to “vex” itself on a subject beyond its reach, outside its sphere of investigation, and upon whose dense darkness God has not shed one ray of light.

The Bible writers are brief and fragmentary

where ordinary writers would be voluminous. The first eleven chapters of Genesis tell us all we know of the creation, the origin of man and of all life; also one-third of what is supposed to be human history. And of nearly all this long period tells us nothing at all.

The record of what is supposed to be a thousand years is given in one short chapter, chiefly an uninteresting list of names, hard to pronounce. To the deluge is given three times the space allowed the preceding thousand years; evidently not because it was so stupendous an event in the history of the world, but because the writer was concerned to set forth another view of sin and of God's administration in regard to it. But thirty-nine chapters are devoted to the history of one man—Abraham, his son, his grandson, and their families.

The writer who gives a few verses to the creation of the universe and the origin of the human race, who refuses to discuss the origin of evil, who dwells so briefly upon the desolating and retributive deluge, enters into domestic and personal details in telling of these three shepherds: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We see them at their best and at their worst, in their weakness and in their strength, in their sins and in their repentances, in their good and evil dealings with

each other, and in their fidelity or disobedience to God. At every turn we have some statement or recital that tells us of sin and goodness, of faith and unbelief, of man's way with God and God's dealings with man.

The Bible which is so plainly not written to tell us any science—as geology, chemistry, electricity, astronomy, medicine, mechanics, or any branch of attainable human knowledge or art—is as evidently not written to give us the history of mankind. There is in Genesis as little detail of history as there is definiteness of scientific statement. There is not enough science or consecutive history in it for a text-book in a village school. There is enough truth and morals and religion in it to occupy the Faculties of all the universities. A sensible man, writing history for history's sake, would never have written the first nine verses of the eleventh chapter of Genesis; for this indistinct, broken outline is all we have about the founding of a city, perhaps the first ever built, the confusion of tongues and the dispersion of the rapidly increasing tribes through the then known world.

What would antiquarians not give—especially if found, not in the Bible, but wrapped up with a mummy of a man in some Egyptian tomb—for a dozen papyri leaves telling of those event-

ful days! And they would believe every word, with no heresy trials, without reference to authorship, whether written by one man or a dozen. There is a degree of sham in much that calls itself "The Higher Criticism."

With the ninth verse of the eleventh chapter of Genesis the writer practically drops the larger part of the human race. He passes by the descendants of Ham and Japheth, and following, for a little space, the line of Shem, gives the meagerest possible outline of history, mostly a list of names no man can make any sense out of, and *hurries on with utmost speed to Abraham*, the one man he was eager to write about.

The Hamitic and Japhetic nations (and very great people they became, leading the world in art and science, letters and commerce, architecture and war through many generations) are no more mentioned in Scripture record to the end of it, except as in some way they touched the life of the chosen people, the posterity of Abraham, called of God to be the founder of a peculiar people; yet not even all of his descendants. For many nations, some of them playing great parts in history, sprang from the loins of Abraham; but the Bible history, except in the incidental way alluded to, confines itself to the children of Jacob,

who was the founder of the Israelitish race. During the long and eventful period, covering all the generations, from the call of Abraham to the last records of Old Testament history, there flourished great and mighty nations; notably, the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian empires. But their history is not given—and then most briefly, in a fragmentary way—except as it touches Israel. The interest of the Bible story, through all these centuries, was focalized on the little nation, the chosen people. All other history is incidental, mere single line drawing.

The story of Israel's servitude in Egypt, covering a period of more than three hundred years, is given in a few short paragraphs. How another writer, knowing Egypt as well as Moses knew it, would have luxuriated in telling us of its civilization, its laws, customs, arts, religions! But he hurries away from it.

How indifferent these inspired writers of the Old Testament seemed to be about chronology! It is impossible for us to fix with any accuracy the dates of the greatest events, from the date of the Creation on to the final breakdown of the Hebrew nation. It is too plain for debate or doubt; these writers were not concerned about history in the ordinary conception of it. Livy wrote of men

and of their fortunes, and he gives us a long and detailed story; Moses and those who follow him write of God and his purposes toward men and his efforts for man's salvation. The human part of the Bible story is brief, fragmentary, impossible to put together in a consecutive story; what tells us of God is full and luminous and powerful in statement and illustration.

The inspired writers are little concerned about the themes that fill other histories, because God was using them to give to his children, the human race, knowledge of himself and of his purposes of salvation and not of mere human affairs.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SIN AND SALVATION.

**I**T is very important to see clearly what the Bible was really written for, what is its motive and reason for existence as a book. Its silence, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, is most suggestive and instructive.

While the writer (they tell us now, with great beating of gongs, that first and last several pens were engaged upon it—what if it be so?) of the Pentateuch gives four or five chapters—and in thinnest, meagerest outline—to a period of about two thousand years; to forty years he gives four whole books, two-thirds of the preceding book being the introduction to what followed, telling us of a small and then despised nation, camping and wandering to and fro in a wilderness. To this lifetime of a generation Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are devoted. But in the ordinary sense these are not books of history. A few chapters would contain all in these four books that is history. There is in them very little of what historians would dwell upon were they writing the annals of such a people during these



eventful forty years in the wilderness of Sinai; the development of their social and industrial, their political and military life. What minute accounts ordinary historians would give of the occasional desperate battles Israel fought with their desert foes! Moses relates such a battle in a paragraph, and fills a dozen chapters with instructions about the law and meaning of sin offerings.

These books are as unique as the people of whom they give us a meager outline of history. They are occupied with God's dealings with his people. Religion is their theme; all else is incidental, mere interlude or side issue. They show how God taught and drilled Israel; doing all that he could do to develop them into a great and glorious nation; to prepare them for the noblest part ever played by any people in this world, to become the moral and religious teachers of the human race. We have in these books what God, who had these wonderful people in hand, considered the most important things; what through all the ages was really worth writing in a book for all mankind.

Silly and ignorant men would have given more time and space to a battle with the Amorites than to all the laws enacted by Moses, under divine guidance, for the social and moral welfare, the religious instruction and spiritual development of the nation.

Some of them would have left God out of the story and given us a "grammar" of the language that Israel used, with foot notes concerning occasional Egyptian idioms. And such men—fools mostly—sneer at the Pentateuch. So much depends on standpoint and angle of vision.

Bible writers do not consider that battle sketches are the most important things; they were not writing sensational subscription books, or getting up reports for the morning papers. They were writing for the ages. To the human race the story of Jacob's wrestling in prayer for pardon and the divine blessing; the account of David's sins, confessions, repentances, and forgiveness, are worth more than a minute report of every one of Joshua's campaigns, or Alexander's, or Cæsar's, or all of them together.

Very great was the privilege and opportunity to Israel; God was their teacher. Paul counted it their chief honor, in those ancient days, that to "them were committed the oracles of God."

This history is utterly unlike others that are classic in literature; but it is, we may well believe, what God most cared for. We have little about what we call national development; we have much about law, obedience, sin, repentance, faith, forgiveness, the punishment of sin, and the re-

wards of fidelity. Nothing is written to gratify curiosity; everything to reveal God and teach men what sin is; nothing to enrich mere human learning, everything to help men understand what religion is.

It is a history, not of nations, but of God's dealings with his children; a record of the Father's tireless and loving effort to make men good. Hence there is so much about individual conduct and so little of the nation at large; for God deals with persons always; through them moves other persons; through them a whole people and the race of man.

Chapter by chapter the plan and purpose of these books unfold, the motive of revelation becomes plain to us. At every stage in the movement we see more clearly the degradation and ruin of sin; we see that God cannot endure it; we see that he makes endless war upon it; we see that he lays heaven and earth under tribute to deliver men from sin and build them up in righteousness. We see also God's immovable and invincible purpose to punish the finally impenitent and save all that will be saved.

These characteristics appear in every statement and recital, every law and ordinance, directly or by implication. We find them in what in them-

selves are very insignificant things; in the least of the ceremonials of worship and commonplace, every day adjustment of relations. They are in the most important and momentous events: the ten plagues, that for one short day brought Pharaoh to his senses, the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea; the giving of the law on Sinai, with the attendant terrors and sublimities of that awful and stupendous day; the miraculous supply of the wants of the people; the pillar of cloud and of fire; in all, we hear words about sin and holiness, obedience and blessing, rebellion and punishment. Where it is not articulate it is an unmistakable undertone. Everywhere we know that God is teaching his loved people what sin and religion are; we know that God is warring upon the enemies of his kingdom and his truth, of his law and of his children.

We need not conclude (what we know from Christ Jesus of divine providence and of grace forbids the thought) that God had no concern for the nations of whom these writers tell us so little. He did have dealings with them, such as at that time best met the ends of their salvation; else they would have been otherwise. But for the instruction of mankind to the end of time, it pleased God, because it was the most useful and gracious meth-

od for all nations as well as for the Hebrew people, to "separate" one small nation to himself that the best that could be done might be done to save them, and through them the whole race of man.

No man who knows God as Jesus Christ has revealed him can for one instant imagine that there ever was a people left out of the thoughts and love, the plans and providence of the great and good Creator, the Father of men. The divine Fatherhood begins with the creation of the first man and woman. God does not love men because Christ died; Christ died because God loved men. And God loved men because he was their Father. He is Father not of Hebrew men only, but of all men everywhen and everywhere. God could not leave out of his thoughts of mercy the Gentile nations in ancient heathen days; he cannot now. Then, ever since, to-day, we know, since Christ Jesus has "shown us God," that he who made man has ever done and is now doing all that he can do to save the souls of his children, whether Hebrew, or Egyptian, or Assyrian, or Chinaman, or African, or any other child of Adam.

"State of the heathen?" question standing ready for debate. The Bible makes it plain

enough. No man, whether ancient Babylonian or modern Hindoostanee, can, by any possibility, be damned who in the light he has does the best he can. Jesus Christ "is the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." These glorious and divine words mean what they say. And so do these: "And the Light shineth in darkness," although "the darkness comprehendeth it not." And these: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

God never left one human soul out of his love and providence. No soul ever was or will be damned that did its best with its light and opportunity. A soul lost without deserving to be lost would upset the universe.

The notion that every one of the hundreds and hundreds of millions of heathen people that have lived and died are in a lake of fire; the notion that every one now living is damned unless he has received the gospel, is a diabolical conceit and a

monstrous insult to an all-wise and infinitely just and good God.

“Logical inference,” says one. It is a most flagrantly illogical inference. But if it were, what is logical inference, in matters of religion, where Jesus has spoken, or where he has not spoken? “A sounding brass” at best. If Christendom actually believed that every human being who has not heard of Christ must be forever damned in agony inconceivable, then what shall Christendom (so slow in sending the gospel to the heathen, with thousands claiming to be Christians doing nothing and some opposing foreign missions) say for itself? It should say this: “My heartlessness is as vile as any heathenism that ever shamed mankind.” To a Christendom so believing, yet doing so little, not feeling it, as if it were nothing, our Lord’s words have awful significance: “That servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.”

The duty of mission work to the heathen lies outside the sphere of human opinions, reasonings, or prejudices. It lies in the unmistakable, absolute command of the Son of God; to refuse obedience to his command is treason; it is “rebellion and as the sin of witchcraft.” This duty inheres

also in the fact and obligation of human brotherhood. Such as have the "mind that was in Christ" would gratefully give his gospel to the heathen if our Lord had said nothing about it. The heathen need the full light of the gospel as truly and as much as Christians need it. The Christian's appreciation of it is measured by his self-sacrifice in giving it to others. He who wants religion only that he may keep out of hell with it will never send the gospel to others to keep them out; he will probably not have enough to keep himself out.

After Moses and the Pentateuch the sacred writers observe the same methods we have been considering, in writing history, psalms, and prophecies. The fragmentary sketches in Judges cover a very long period, probably four hundred years; but brief as they are, a great part of them are taken up with individual lives, the sins, repentances, forgivenesses, and punishments of the individual sinners; the faith, good works, and rewards of the faithful and true. And it is all so written that we never get confused as to rights and wrongs, when we find some who were leaders of Israel, and in some respects good and faithful men, doing things out of character with religion. Those who read the New Testament first, and breathe into their souls



its spirit, will never suffer confusion of thought, or conscience, in any passage in the Old Testament history. No matter what men do, according to that record, we always know where God stands, opposed to sin; and we always see that sin leads and can only lead to trouble and ruin.

The other historical books on through the Acts of the Apostles are full of illustrations of the thought, that we have not in the Bible general history, but special accounts, as being best fitted to set forth and make plain the purpose manifest from the beginning; to teach men to know and to trust God, to honor and obey him; to make them understand what sin is, God punishing when Israel went wrong, blessing when they kept his law.

Sometimes the history of Judah or Israel, during the lifetime of a king, is given in a short paragraph of meager information; only telling us that he reigned, was good or bad, and died. Yet here and there we have chapter after chapter, detailing the personal lives of some of these rulers, but never simply to tell us about them, but to make plain and vivid God's thoughts about them and his purposes concerning sin and salvation. How minutely we are told of Ahab and Jezebel, two most unworthy and contemptible people! More space is given to them, ignoble and degraded as they were in per-

sonal character, than to the history of the greatest of the prophets: Isaiah, Ezekiel, or Daniel, for example. But none can miss the lesson: they are both of them—this weak, bad man, and this strong, bad woman—monstrous object lessons, giving us vivid conceptions of littleness, meanness, corruption, and heinous sin.

At one time David pushed his conquests till he held sway from Damascus to the borders of Egypt, and from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea, the one period in all Hebrew history when the Kingdom of Israel, in magnitude and power, became one of the great monarchies of the world. Yet this brilliant and, humanly speaking, most important period in all Hebrew history is passed over in a few passionless, colorless words; while chapter after chapter is given to the personal history of David, the man. No victorious campaign this truly great soldier ever planned, or fought, receives one-tenth of the attention from the sacred writers that they give to his horrible crimes in the dishonor of Bath-sheba and the murder of Uriah; to his humble confession, his profound repentance, and his absolute forgiveness. The fifty-first Psalm is worth more for the instruction of mankind, for the encouragement and comfort of penitent sinners, than

all his campaigns and his long reign over Israel put together.

Can the least reflective fail to see that these details of David's personal life are far more important for our instruction than the fullest detail of his political and military achievements! No other book ever written by a friend would have lifted the curtain and exposed to the light of day Israel's greatest hero in the degradation of the double crime of adultery and murder, yet dismiss with a paragraph campaigns, battles, and conquests that ranked him with the great captains of the world. No; the Bible does not give us general history, nor anything like a full history even of Israel. But we do have line upon line, recital after recital, precept after precept, teaching us the thoughts and will of God upon the most important subjects that engage the human mind; lessons taught more vividly than in any other writing that ever was; lessons that hold their grip on the attention and interest of mankind in all times and countries, as no other fragment of any history ever did. Other fragments of profane history we could name that are locked up in dead languages, known perhaps to a hundred men in the world—a dozen may be masters of them, as we find it to be so as to certain "remains" from Babylon or Nineveh—but of no more vitalizing power upon

mankind than a tooth of Pharaoh Rameses. The reason is plain; the teachings fit the case and meet the needs of all men; they show us sin and its ruin, religion and its blessings. They show us God in his relations to men; his thoughts about him; his love for him; his effort to save him, and yet the inexorable judgment day waiting for the disobedient. These teachings "come home" to each man's heart and conscience, and in their light he sees himself to be a sinner and God to be a merciful Father who will forgive those who repent, but also a just and holy Father who must punish the impenitent and rebellious.

These are historical doctrinal expositions and good for us as for Israel, and that we ought to understand better than they could, since we have the full light of the gospel; of the doctrine based in nature as well as revealed in Scripture, that "the wages of sin is death," and of that other doctrine revealed in Scripture but not taught by nature: "he that believeth shall be saved."

How clearly and with what painstaking patience these truths are developed and illustrated in the whole law of Moses concerning religion! The elaborate ceremonial worship, with its impressive symbolism from beginning to end, taught men of sin and penalty, of repentance and forgiveness, of

defilement and purity. The offerings for sacrifice had their significance in the heinousness of sin, the necessity of atonement, and the blessings of pardon to the penitent believer. The entire ritual of worship appointed for tabernacle and temple we can only understand when we consider the general principle here under review. The white-robed priest, the sprinkled blood, the smoke of the burnt offering, all spoke of sin and purity.

What is in the historical is also the burden of the poetical and prophetical books of the Old Testament and of every one in the New—law, sin, repentance, punishment, and forgiveness. According to the teachings of this Book, God's whole administration of human affairs has its motive and end in his desire and effort to save men from sin and its ruin.

Jesus Christ, in his words and works, in his living and dying, completed the instruction that had been carried on so long. On these greatest of all questions Jesus makes all things plain. He teaches us what sin is, what salvation is. He makes it certain that everlasting punishment follows unpardoned sin, and that eternal life follows forgiveness and the new birth. He finishes what the holy writers began and carried as far as it could be carried by even inspired men. He, the Son of

God and the Son of man, completed the revelation of the perfect truth that makes free the souls of men. Living among the most lowly, he showed what a man ought to be, and has in so doing given the world its final test of character. He "showed men the Father," infinitely merciful to the wretchedest of penitent sinners, yet a God inexorably just and hating sin. The writings of apostles, of apostolic men and of all true preachers and livens of the gospel, but continue to expound and to impress what Jesus taught.

We should not be surprised when we do not find in the Bible what did not in the least concern the divine purpose in revelation, science, or history. And if at any time science or history should seem to show us indisputable facts that appear to be out of harmony with the fragmentary history contained in the Bible (and these little historical etchings not written for history, but for instruction in the divine method of saving men from their sins), we should consider, should such things in the least trouble us, that had the sacred writers given us a full and complete statement of science or record of history, as they have given us about sin and salvation, there might disappear the least shadow of discrepancy, even about things in them-

selves so insignificant that their being one way or another is a matter of no concern.

In dealing with other books than the Bible, men, in studying them, consider what they were written for. If we had the history of a murder trial, involving questions of anatomy and surgery, we would not look for statute law or the rules of evidence in a doctor's report of the case, nor would we expect in a lawyer's report of it a discussion of anatomy.

This is certain: The Bible teaches no truth about rights or wrongs that any history contradicts or any science condemns. In all the civilized world there is not one evil recognized and condemned that the Bible had not first condemned, and not one virtue recognized and approved that the Bible had not first approved.

The Bible themes are two: *Sin and Salvation.*

## CHAPTER V.

IF B. IS NOT GOOD, A IS BAD.

**I**NFIDELITY for the most part has its root in sin; not necessarily animalism, but sin, which has as many varieties as things not infinite can have.

The Psalmist, with slight change in the words, writes in two places: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God: corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity." The poet's observation taught him that people's thinking and living have much to do with each other.

If one could begin life a sincere atheist (and this was never yet done), he would naturally break divine law for the simple reason that he would "follow his bent." It is equally certain that a bad man readily takes up with whatever form of unbelief he runs into first, when, for peace of mind's sake, he finds it necessary to lower his creed to fit his life. St. Peter writes of "scoffers walking in their own lusts," the living and the scoffing having perfectly natural relations, as those of cause and effect.

In all infidel writings, whether of philosophers or the coarse breed of scoffers, there is always



an avowed antagonism to God, or an unmistakable undertone. Julian denied and denounced Christ + because he was an apostate. This is the teaching of the Bible; it is the doctrine of common sense; it is observation. No man is long tolerant of a creed that condemns his life or character; the contrast makes him unhappy.

It can serve no good purpose to bring forward many examples from the attacks of unbelievers upon the Word of God, sometimes flippant, sometimes bitter, sometimes irreverent, sometimes ignorant, often with all these qualities together. The people know what they are; the newspapers give them out, and the daily talk of men keeps them in circulation. Some general principles should be remembered when the coarse sneerings and captious cavilings of bad men, warring on the Bible, are heard. No man is fit to speak about religion who reviles the Word of God. If he knew it to be false, he who reviles a Book that the best people in the world revere is a bad man, with the instincts of a blackguard. Such a man does not think; his words simply express his character, not any conclusion of his intellect. His spirit is bad; whether there be truth in religion or no, he is disqualified for judgment. If a writer, hating the United States and its people, should undertake

to expound our institutions or to describe our people, what fitness has he for such a work? The principle needs no proof; jurors who admit prejudice, even in courts of low degree, are told to "stand aside."

The Old Testament Scriptures have had much attention from the scoffers; also from graver and more reputable men who do think and command respect. In the opinion of its critics and adversaries, the Old Testament has often been destroyed, but it still holds its place as the most extraordinary writing in the world except the New Testament.

It would throw this book into disproportion and utter unbalance to take up point by point the objections brought against the character of persons, the laws of Moses, and other Old Testament writings. Some general considerations, pertinent to the subject, and a few illustrations will serve the present purpose.

First of all, be it remembered, the attack is made from the standpoint of Christianity; they judge the Old Testament by the New. They seek to show inconsistency. The method of the attack is fatal to the argument; they admit that Christianity is the highest and final test of right and wrong, for it is by Christian principles that they try the morality of the Old Testament. When they at-

tack any statement, recital, statute, or character they always get their weapon from the Christian arsenal. There is no other place where they can find it. There is only one book on a higher moral plane than the Old Testament; it is the New Testament. Their argument is this and nothing more: "There are some things in the Old Testament inconsistent with Christianity; therefore Christianity is not true." This is perhaps absurd; it is also a perfectly fair formulation of their reasoning. If such logic be a trifle silly, the blame is theirs who trust in it. It is of this sort: "If B's grandfather lived below A's standard, then A. is a bad man."

But we must be just. Such arguments grow out of ignorance and misconception. They proceed upon this idea, taught to unbelievers by sincere but mistaken Christians:

Any part of the Bible is as important as any other part, and the fate of Christianity turns upon the absolute truth of every statement of every sort in the Old Testament and upon the irreproachable goodness of every old Testament worthy; whereas the fate of Christianity depends on Christ.

He who esteems, with what sincerity and reverence soever, the military roster in Numbers as sacred as the sermon on the mount, or the idyl of

Ruth of equal value with "The Acts of the Apostles," or the minor statutes and "special orders" of Moses for the regulation of the ordinary business affairs of Israel in the wilderness on a level with the Decalogue itself, or the Song of Solomon as important as the book of Psalms, or the Proverbs on the same plane as Isaiah, or a list of names in Ezra as meaning as much to the hungry soul as the Gospel according to John, will very naturally fall into difficulties. If the unbeliever depends upon such a man for his knowledge of Christianity, he will naturally concentrate his fire upon those parts of the Old Testament that he supposes are inconsistent with the morality of the gospel. When he has had his shot, he supposes, in his dense ignorance, that he has overthrown Christianity, when he has only knocked over his little straw man, the work of his own unskilled hands.

The answer to all this sort of thing is so simple and obvious as to seem hardly worth making: Whatever antagonizes Christianity, wherever found, is unchristian and bad; whatever contradicts Christ Jesus, wherever found, is unchristian and false.

A Christian not ready to stand on this platform has perhaps never asked himself: "What is it

that I do, in my innermost soul, really and truly believe?" Such a disciple is not yet "made free by the truth" as it is in Christ; nor has he, at bottom, intelligent or profound reverence for Christ Jesus.

It is curious that unbelievers have not themselves seen the broken span in their bridge of argument. Only when reasoning about religion do they make such fatal slips in their logic. Condemning the Old Testament by Christianity as a method of overturning Christianity itself seems to be a trifle absurd. They ought to see that if they make good their charges against the Old Testament they have only proved that it does not come up to Christianity by which, as believers do, they really test all questions of rights and wrongs, not only in the Bible but in everyday life. No thoughtful and informed Christian ever believed that the Old Testament comes up to Christianity.

Trying and condemning the Old Testament by the Gospels and then rejecting the Gospels is like an attorney who, having impeached the veracity of Jones by the testimony of Smith, turns around and himself swears that Smith is a liar. A method with witnesses the courts do not approve.

The illogical unbeliever is not altogether to blame for his absurd misconceptions; not a few

Christian writers have vehemently endeavored to reconcile with Christianity everything in the Bible not expressly declared to be bad. In a spirit of sincere but mistaken reverence many have sought to condone or explain away the imperfections, failures, faults, and sins of Old Testament men. This is a grave error, and an offense to the spirit of truth and candor that asserts itself in every part of the Holy Book.

In the mere outline sketches which the Bible gives of the greatest men whose names appear on its pages the record tells what they did, not what they ought to have done. These Bible writers were not romancers; else we would have had no account of Abraham prevaricating in Egypt about Sarah, his beautiful wife; of Jacob's chicanery and villainous treatment of father, brother, and father-in-law before his conversion; of Moses losing his temper and, like an angry child, breaking upon the mountain path the precious tables of stone; of the monstrous crimes of David in the murder of his brave captain, Uriah, and the crimson shame of Bath-sheba; of poor Job, after an unmatched victory of fortitude and faith, losing his patience—a grace in which no man has surpassed him—till he cursed the day he was born.

The faults and sins of these men—nowhere ap-

+ proved in the Scriptures, and condemned every one of them—are no more objections against Christianity than are the inconsistencies or sins of any member of the Church here in this town of Oxford, Georgia.

There are no writings like these; recording with dispassionate, straightforward simplicity the sins and shames of those who were the leaders of the people, the heroes of the nation.

As illustrative simply of one method of infidel attack, the much ado made over the execution of a man who gathered wood to make a fire on the Sabbath day may be mentioned. The infidel, fighting Christianity and finding his conception of right and wrong in Christianity, says that Moses was narrow and cruel. Suppose he was: Christianity does not sanction narrowness or cruelty. Besides, Moses never professed perfection of any sort; only small men do that; nor does the Bible affirm it of him.

Christianity is the exhaustless fountain of mercy; out of it flow all the charities that honor our times. Out of it have grown hospitals and the relief of the poor. Its gracious spirit has mitigated the horrors of war. Because of it the "Red Cross" carries nurses across the lines of battle—all men honoring the helper of the wounded and the sick;

all soldiers "presenting arms" to men and women doing good.

"But," says the unbeliever, "such a man was God's chosen leader." This shifts the attack from Christianity to God himself. The unbeliever forgets that in working the great plans of his providence, oftentimes through the agency of evil men, it has pleased God to use the best material available. There was nothing else to do.

If Moses was not as good as he ought to have been, this no more impeaches Christianity, or makes an argument against the goodness of God, than does the failure in morals of any teacher of religion of our own times, or than the treachery of Judas convicted the eleven faithful apostles of treason.

But the charge of narrowness and cruelty against Moses is itself false and foolish. He was the broadest-minded man who lived before Christ, and he so loved his people that he was ready to die in their stead.

The charge is based in ignorance. Men forget history and the significance of obedience to law when they accuse Moses of tyranny in the execution of this lawbreaker. Moses was not only the teacher of Israel; he was the lawgiver, ruler, military commander—"Dictator," if any prefer the



term—in charge of a great undrilled army and a total population of about three millions; ignorant and restless, yesterday slaves and to-day—as America has seen to sad degree—mistaking liberty for license.

The case was aggravated and utterly without defense. The wood gatherer had not only broken one of the Ten Commandments; he had violated repeated orders, “general” and “special.” (Let the reader compare Exodus xx. 8–11; xxxi. 12–17; xxxv. 1–3; Numbers xv. 32–36.)

The man had defiantly violated one of the best-understood orders of the commander in chief. Situated as these hosts of Israel were, in a wilderness swarming with enemies; the fighting men undrilled and the people half barbarous, life and the fate of the great movement of which God had made him the leader depended on obedience. Had that flagrant lawbreaker been left to follow his own notions of what to do and what to leave undone, that army and that multitude would soon have been turned into a mob.

Their disposition to riot and outbreak was always easily excited. Moses wisely, as in sacred duty bound, had the man killed in the ordinary way for criminal executions. Napoleon had a soldier shot for keeping a light in his tent—writing to

his wife, too!—after the hour fixed by general orders, read to the army, for putting them out. And Napoleon was right. The lives of thousands were involved in obedience; maybe the fate of the campaign and of France.

A general commanding a large Confederate force, during the war between the States in America, was making a perilous night march. Stringent orders were issued forbidding the discharge of firearms. One dare-devil shot a chicken, and the general had him shot. The general did right; so did Moses.

In many a war it has come to pass that in dealing with human demons, like those who butchered the helpless and the innocent at Cawnpore in 1857, eternal righteousness required that no quarter should be given. And the lives of thousands of women and babies in the coming years required it also. It would have been right to have put to death Alva, King Philip, and all responsible with them, whether princes or bishops, when they were ravaging the Netherlands and butchering the people like they were wild beasts, because they were Protestants. It would have been right for any who had the power to do it to have exterminated Cortes and his whole gang of robbers and cutthroats. Civilization does not demand that pirates taken on

the high seas, or red-handed train wreckers be given the honors of war. Only weak-headed sentimentalism recoils at the divine-human law of capital punishment for capital crimes. Willful murder, house burning, train wrecking, rape, deserve death, and nothing short of death satisfies justice or protects society.

Among the scores of Canaanitish tribes that came into conflict with Israel were some so brutal and demoniac in their cruelties that they deserved extermination as enemies of the human race. Their crimes against Israel were only a part of the divine indictment under which Heaven decreed their extermination. Most of those called "kings" in the list of those subdued by Joshua were only sheiks of little marauding bands, holding some walled town in the hills for refuge when outfought and hard pressed. From their strongholds they made forays as far from their base as they dared, striking where there were most cattle to steal, or most young girls to outrage or enslave, and the fewest men to fight. They were on a level with Arab slavers in Africa to-day, enemies of the human race, whom righteous vengeance suffereth not to live, and who should be shot down in their tracks wherever found.

Why should unbelief distress its mind at the

vigorous measures Joshua and other defenders of Israel found necessary in dealing with these Canaanitish clans? Such cases are not peculiar to the Bible; such scenes have occurred in every land where human progress had to fight its way against savagery. Such scenes occurred in Kentucky when Daniel Boone was blazing the way for civilization. And Boone receives deserved honor. Was it unchristian for him to protect wife and babies against red Indians with tomahawks and scalping knives? But if Boone or Joshua did at any place or time cross the line of right, they simply did wrong; their wrong does not impeach Christianity, by which alone we determine what is right or wrong.

We need not, in the least, shrink from saying, before the unbeliever says it for us, that Joshua followed divine directions in putting some of the Canaanitish savages out of the way. We are willing to go farther and say, Daniel Boone also moved under divine guidance and succeeded by divine help. Joshua did right to obey; so did Boone. If further objection be urged, it is against the great God himself; his character is impeached because he ordered the extermination of savage Amalekites, Amorites, and a few other such demon men. Great ado is made against Christianity because Joshua

obeyed and did a good thing, which these infidels would have clapped their hands over if they had found it somewhere else than in the Bible.

Suppose it had pleased God to make cholera or smallpox the executioner of his sentence against people that deserved to die instead of Joshua's sword? If such a method of disposing of them had been employed, objection to it would attack the orderings of everyday providence, not Christianity. If the unbeliever in pressing his complaint prefers to say "nature" rather than providence, what is left him? Not a verdict against Christianity, but against the order of the universe, and pessimism (a philosophy the most inane, useless, silly, and cowardly that ever held place in human heads), a composite of dyspepsia, egotism, and unbelief—doctrine for fools only—is all that is left him. He can only swear at the universe, declaring that everything is as bad as it can be, and forever getting worse, which sound-headed men know to be false.

Many nations have deservedly perished for their crimes, some being cut off at a blow, others by the slower but certain operation of law; men, women, and children marching into their graves. Such processes of divine providence are going on

with some peoples now; why should the case of these men of Canaan give us perplexity?

That the innocent often suffer with the guilty in the history of nations is a commonplace of experience, not at all peculiar to Hebrew records. Every time a brute reduces his family to starvation by drunkenness and other vice the innocent suffer with the guilty. By the law of our existence heredity and environment assert themselves, and vice in the parents breeds not only vice but disease and suffering in the children. This is a matter of fact whether we account for it or not. It is equally true that by the law of our existence men of violence, whether a gang of cattle thieves, train robbers, border bandits, a community, a tribe, or a nation, will raise up enemies who in the long run will put them out of the way.

This universal law has brief but terse, luminous, and powerful exposition in the first statute on murder: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed." Vastly significant is the reason that accompanies the statute: "For in the image of God made he man."

This statute (delivered to Noah and his sons when they had left the ark that had saved them and began anew their struggle for existence and their training that they might be better men than

their drowned kindred had been) was not a decree of arbitrary and capricious power; it was the divine formulation of one of the fundamental principles of the constitution under which the human race existed. The transactions on Sinai did not originate law; they formulated it, made it plain to the understanding of simple men, and enforced the obligation to obedience by the awful sanctions of life and death.

The punishment, even to destruction, of a company of bad men, of a whole tribe or of a whole nation of men, who, by cruelty and lust, have outlawed themselves, was administered under the great primordial laws under which man was created; whether by the hand of Joshua or some other "scourge of God," putting out of the world men not fit to live in it.

With a memory for words always treacherous, and with no opportunity for verifying what would be a strict quotation, were he sure of it, the author recalls a sentence from college or other reading long ago and from some book he forgets: "No difficulty emerges in theology that had not previously emerged in philosophy." The words in quotation may not be just as they were read years ago, but the principle is sound. For death goes on, and would go on if Christianity were not ex-

istent, of the good and the bad, of hoary criminals and sweet babes; all alike involved in the law of mortality to bodies. Persons are not under this law, and cannot be; only bodies are under it. And bodies were created under this law.

Death of bodies has been going on ever since good Abel was brained by jealous Cain; going on without help from Alva, Cortes, Nebuchadnezzar, Genghis Khan (bad men all, and yet, although not fearing God, not thereby outside the range of the divine administration of affairs); without help from Moses, Joshua, William the Silent, Oliver Cromwell, George Washington, "Chinese" Gordon, or other servant and soldier of the Most High; without help of Roman, or Goth, or Assyrian, or Englishman, or Amalekite.

More babies have died of plague than sword strokes. The "black death," cholera, smallpox, and other diseases have carried to their graves more human bodies than all the wars put together. More women have gone out of the flesh in the pains of childbirth than were ever butchered by bloody swords.

As an argument against Christianity, the infidel fulmination against Joshua in his dealings with the murdering tribes of Canaan is silly; at bottom it is only a revolt against the law of mortality,

*Bodies die not, but*



which in itself is no curse, but a mercy of God and a blessing to mankind. As an argument against Christianity the humblest grave of an unknown outcast, above all a baby's coffin, suggests as much.

As to the guilty men and women slain by Joshua's sword, they deserved to die; as to innocent children who died with the rest, it was a mercy for them to be taken out of the flesh rather than grow up to be what their demon fathers were. God does not wrong a baby when he takes it to himself. To think of its translation in any such way is foolish; when Christians think of it as a wrong done to them they are wicked; they are in open rebellion against the divine will, which St. Paul declares to be "good, and acceptable, and perfect."

The sum of the matter is this: If, in the conduct of his wars, Joshua did wrong in this or that (and he stands here for all in like case), we determine and measure the wrong by the test found in the Gospels, and this maintains Christianity. If in any case he acted only on his own impulse and will; if in so doing he did cruel things for the sake of revenge, then he did wrong, and Christianity condemns him. If in exterminating a tribe of robbers and cutthroats he acted only under divine orders, he

was obedient to God, he did a righteous deed, and both history and Christianity approve him.

Death by the sword, whether in the hands of one divinely commissioned or a ruffian butcher like Alva, no more impeaches Christianity than death by earthquake, cyclone, plague, or old age.

As noted before, all such arguments against Christianity and impeachments of the order of Providence as we have been considering assume at bottom that the death of the body is itself an evil; an opinion contrary to the facts and the teachings of sound sense and of the Holy Scriptures. It is an opinion that entangles Providence, philosophy, common sense, and theology into a hopeless confusion of complex loops, knots, perplexities, and contradictions. It is an opinion most strongly held by those who work out their conclusions by some sort of logical process, and who have not really considered the work Jesus Christ came into the world to do. St. Paul, the very best expositor of the facts and meanings of Christ's work in the world, has summed up his triumphant and jubilant doctrine with glorious words many good people do not seem to remember, or, remembering, do not believe: "He hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

## CHAPTER VI. X

### PROVISIONAL LAWS.

**I**N discussing questions growing out of Old Testament history or law, it is needful, if there is to be any rational thinking, to remember that the ancient Hebrews had not the light of Christianity by which unbelievers judge and condemn them, under the absurd notion that in so doing they condemn Christianity.

God gave to Adam and to those who came after him the light of truth as fast as it was good for them. The daydawning was slow; the morning twilight long. From the first to the second Adam intervened a period supposed to be four thousand years (good Bishop Usher “ciphred” it out to be exactly “4004 B.C!”); perhaps a much longer period; no truth of Christianity is mixed up in the almanac time question: longer or shorter does not matter. We know that the delay was not too long, for God took this time. The apostle says that Christ Jesus appeared “in the fullness of time”—that is, at the right time, when the world was as ready for the Gospel as it could be made without his personal presence and ministry.

Without inquiring too closely into the methods it pleased God to employ, we may easily understand some of the reasons that made gradual revelation necessary. God dealt with men as a wise parent deals with children. There are many most important matters that it is unwise and foolish to tell little children; they will not only not understand, they will misunderstand. Few things are more dangerous than truth misapprehended. Upon one occasion Jesus said to his disciples: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." They were not ready; their thoughts and their living were then so far below the level of their Lord's teaching that they could not have understood him. Misunderstanding any statement of truth—his most of all—would have done them hurt.

Let us suppose that the laws of Moses on the subject of marriage, of divorce, and the relations of men and women had been projected on the plane of the sermon on the mount, what could the men before Abraham, or Abraham himself, or the people who came out of Egypt, have made out of them?

Or, consider the subject of worship. What could the children of Israel have understood had Moses told them what Jesus said to the woman as

he sat resting on Jacob's well? Is it at all certain that Moses himself could have understood our Lord? She, standing fast in the "traditions of the fathers," said to Jesus: "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus answered, speaking not for the old but the new time: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

The men who built altars on ground made sacred to them by special interpositions of Providence, who must think of a holy place, of tabernacle or temple, some Bethel or Beersheba, in order to worship, could have made nothing for their souls out of our Lord's words to the Samaritan woman. By ceremonial and symbolism—as we teach children through pictures and object lessons—God helped them to apprehend spiritual things; taking infinite pains with them to train them in all goodness of which, in their low social and religious development, they were capable.

Generations passed away before these people were ready to hear the sermon on the mount; century after century God had them at school in

training for better things, using all methods known to infinite wisdom, with divine patience leading his people Israel. He sent them law-givers, reformers, heroes, prophets, psalmists, holy men; he blessed them when obedient and scourged them as "a father chasteneth his children" when rebellious.

The patient husbandman might well say to his people through the poet and prophet of Israel: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?"

But not till the two kingdoms—first of Israel, then of Judah—were overthrown, and the best of the people carried across the wide desert to a long captivity in Babylon, were these rebellious children cured of their strong tendency to worship idols, "the work of men's hands," as did other nations of the earth.

Not only "the law," but their whole history, from Sinai to the visit of the wise men from the East to the cradle in Bethlehem, "was a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ." When Jesus did preach the "sermon on the mount" few of the people were ready to hear or understand. Are we ready to-day? This nation of pupils began in

their alphabet and words of one syllable; for generations their progress was slow.

It would have been a very strange thing, and altogether unwonted in God's dealings with men, if the first simple code he gave for their guidance, or the more elaborate system of laws he delivered through Moses, had been on the plane of Christianity. Evolutionists should recognize and admire this gradual unfolding of the plans and purposes of God toward men; it was according to the "eternal fitness of things." To expect Christianity in the Mosaic code is like saying that Christ ought to have come *before* "the fullness of time."

The Ten Commandments abide for all time and generations, as the foundation of all law and order in the social and moral world. None who commend themselves or their doctrines to the approval of wise and good men would for a moment consider the repeal of either one of them.

French infidels, when the nation was temporarily insane, tried it on the fourth commandment; but nature herself rebelled, and the human body itself required the Sabbath rest. An increasing multitude in our own times and country are openly violating the law of rest and worship. The necessity and goodness of the law is vindicated by disobedience in them; the certain and manifest de-

terioration of personal character, the increase of domestic unhappiness and general laxness in all the moralities.

And with the Ten Commandments abide in original vigor the moral principles that entered into all the laws of Moses. But very many of the special statutes of Moses were in their very nature temporary and local, the need of them growing out of the conditions of time and place; they were wise and good for the ends they were appointed to serve, but they were provisional.

For illustration: There were many statutes that provided for the care of the tabernacle and its furniture. When the tabernacles disappeared their function was ended. But the spirit of them is good, showing with what orderliness and reverence we should care for the house of God. There were special rules for the regulation of the encampment "when all Israel dwelt in tents." When they dwelt in houses, in villages, towns, and walled cities, many of these statutes in their letter and form went into "innocuous desuetude." The principle of order which underlay them appeared in other laws fitted to new conditions. Many statutes regulating worship fell into disuse with the passing away of the sacrificial and ceremonial system. That Moses considered many of



his statutory laws provisional is evident from his treatment of them. From the first giving of the law till his death, a period of nearly forty years, as experience taught him and new conditions made it necessary, he modified not a few of them. It should not surprise us if inspiration used the experience of good men as surely as their gifts of reasoning or imagination. Many illustrations of the statement may be given.

The book of Deuteronomy is not a mere repetition of the laws recorded in Exodus and announced nearly forty years before; it is rather a volume of "Revised Statutes," new ones being added and old ones modified to suit the changed conditions, or as practical administration showed the need of amendment.

Take the Sabbath question: Exodus xx. 8-11:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work;

"But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the

seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Deuteronomy v. 12-15:

"Keep the Sabbath day, to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.

"Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work:

"But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

"And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day."

The modifications in statement introduce no new principle; the words enjoining rest for cattle are more comprehensive, as experience had shown to be necessary, and special attention is called to the claims of servants. Thus early the inspired writers show us that it is "the spirit that giveth life" and that the mere "letter killeth."

Terrible reading we have here for the "go-as-you-please" people of our times; vibrant with awful

warning and terrible with muttering thunder, heralding tempests about to break upon them—to great “employers” and “corporations” to whom Sunday is simply a working day to “employees” and a pleasure day to them. So surely as God smote in consuming wrath Pharaoh and his taskmasters for giving to their poor Hebrew slaves no Sabbath rest, so surely will he settle with big sinners to-day who plead “business interests”—the name of our dominant idolatry—for defying the law of God.

As to special statutes, based on the fourth commandment, compare Exodus xx. 8-11; xxiii. 12-17; xxxiv. 21; xxxv. 2, etc. These were not idle repetitions. Experience taught this wisest of law-givers, “meekest”—that is, most teachable—of men, what was necessary for his people, God guiding him in all things.

The subject of interest on borrowed money—“usury” having no sort of reference to “legal rate” of interest (a modern affair entirely)—is an interesting example. Compare the variations: Exodus xxii. 25; Leviticus xxv. 35-37; Deuteronomy xv. 7-11; xxiii. 19, 20, etc. The “Revised Statutes” show that Moses allowed them to charge interest for money borrowed on business accounts, but not to relieve the distress of poverty or affliction. The “stranger”—word for it meaning

“wanderer,” “caravan man,” “merchant” at last (so some wise in words tell us)—was in a different case, and loans to him might bear such interest as business allowed.

Yet—so do many stick in the letter—if civil law allowed fifty per cent. per annum there are men who would take it from a brother in distress and count themselves pious, who would not charge ten per cent. to a land speculator if the State said stop at nine. And some people sometimes denounce as “usurers” those who take eight per cent. if the State says stop at seven. There are scores of such instances. The revised statutes were found needful, expedient, righteous, just as the national wants developed and the needs of the people were made manifest—the good and wise God supervising the evolution—and experience showed Moses—always seeking divine guidance—what was not only good but best for his beloved Israel.

If God used, under his law of inspiration, the natural gifts of Moses, his thorough schooling in all that Egypt knew of law and learning, of science and war and government; his special training during forty years, while he kept Jethro’s flocks in the hills and valleys of Midian, brooding in solitude upon all he had learned and upon the great

questions of human life, and so coming truly to know some things; also learning a self-control he did not have that day he brained a ruffian Egyptian task-master with a club; why should one be surprised if inspiration used for the purpose of revelation the ampler knowledge and fuller wisdom that could only come to him by the added forty years of his leadership of Israel, while God was drilling them into fitness to enter upon their promised inheritance? So far as they are grounded in the eternal rights; so far as they fit the needs common to humanity, the principles of these laws abide unto this day. When wise King Alfred began legislating for our English ancestors, in social condition and development not far, if at all, above the state of Israel in the wilderness; when, having whipped his enemies on every side, he set himself to the harder task of molding his scattered and oft-times warring bands into the body of a nation, destined to leadership among the people of all the world; he copied literally many of the laws of Moses; others he modified to meet the needs of men in England.

Doubtless God helped the good king mightily; to all who try faithfully to do the "work given them to do," "the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding" in such degree as helps

them to do the best work possible to them. And through Moses and Alfred, and other wise and God-fearing men through all the generations, it comes to pass that the best laws in the civilized world to-day have their root, as well as their spirit, in the statutes the greatest lawgiver of all the ages ordained for Israel in the wilderness. If all our law that originates in Moses were taken away, our civilization would come to an end.

Many statutory enactments or "special orders" of Moses fitted only that time and people, just as the liturgy of their worship, when ceremonials and symbols were necessary to lift their thoughts to nobler things, suited them and did them good, but would now, since Jesus Christ has made every spot of earth "holy ground" to him who "worships the Father in spirit and in truth," be not only useless, but injurious to a fatal degree. To those who are willing to take their notions of religion from Jesus Christ, first hand, all this is made very plain: "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved." The old dry bottles, made of skins, could not endure the fermentation of the new wine; yet many good people, as if

they thought Jesus wrong about it, insist upon filling the old bottles with the new wine, and never know their error till all is lost. If we would only listen to *Him!*

Such laws of Moses as, in their nature, were temporary and provisional, having served a noble end, are folded up as a worn-out vesture and laid away; to be used no more, but useful as illustrative of the history of the Church of God and his infinite painstaking in teaching his children the truth.

Webster's "Blue-back Speller" has started millions on the way to learning. It fitted well the time it was designed for; it is not on the table now; the "Unabridged Dictionary" takes the place of its humble forerunner, but does not contradict or dishonor it.

Only fools sneer at the little "Blue-back Speller," on which our dear mothers put covers what time we were crying our way to "Ba-ker." The scholar who knows how to use the "Unabridged" and the "Cyclopedias" holds in honor the little book which gave him the keys that unlock the strong boxes where the precious treasures of learning are.

When the Apostolic College, A.D. 52, took up the burning question of the circumcision of the

Gentile converts, their conclusion, with the "decree" sent throughout the Churches, illustrated, in a very important matter and in a very striking way, their recognition of the principle under consideration. Their decision was based on the principle enunciated by St. Paul: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

Among other illustrative examples Bible readers will recall the law of paying tithes as an important instance of a law, in its nature provisional and adapted to the time and people and form of government under which they lived. The people were required to give a tenth, the germ idea being perhaps older than the time of Abraham, for the support of Church and State. A fixed rate of giving was necessary for half-developed people (as with many such to-day this law serves a useful purpose not to be gainsaid); though, upon occasion, the nobler souls made generous offerings without respect to the rule of the tithes.

In Christian times we have a rule of the spirit and not of the letter in the support of religion, fixed rates of paying being left to Cæsar. Jesus, commenting on the gift of the widow's mite—the "all she had"—gives us the standpoint from which he judges gifts, not rate but sacrifice.



To the State honest men pay their share of the taxes according to a fixed rate; the others lie about it, and leave their neighbors to make up the lack, thus robbing their fellows in trying to cheat the government. But even under Cæsar it is not fair or reasonable that a day laborer, with a thousand-dollar cottage for shelter, should pay the same rate in his taxes that he pays who owns millions.

To religion, whether in Church work or in the relief of suffering, Christian men have a principle of giving that is above statutes and rates. St. Paul expounds the Christian principle in his eulogy upon the abounding liberality of the Churches in Macedonia. Christians, who obey the law of Christ, give "according to their several ability." This law may sometimes require far more than the tenth; sometimes much less. Christianity gauges liberality not by what is given, but by what is left.

What is given "grudgingly or of necessity" is not acceptable to God; it is like a diseased sheep a bad Israelite might have offered for sacrifice—seeing that he did not want it and nobody would buy it. "God loveth a cheerful giver;" one so glad to help with gifts the work of his Lord that his happy soul is hilarious with grateful

laughter while he pinches himself to do good to others.

In Christian times God lays on every man's conscience what he shall give to the work of the Redeemer. Woe unto him who blinds his conscience by the lust of gold!

Moses never claimed perfection for the code of laws which, under divine direction, he promulgated for the government of his people. Christianity is no more impeached by finding flaws and imperfections in the statutes of Moses than by finding faults in his life; with this difference: he was only to be blamed when yielding to a fit of temper under terrible provocation, whereas Jesus Christ teaches us that, as to his laws, though many of them were below the Christian standard, yet they were right and good for their time; they were the best that could be done for a people so low in moral development as were the poor Israelites, so recently delivered from their horrible bondage in sensual and idolatrous Egypt, and so little trained in higher ways of living.

Let us consider in the next chapter two very important and striking cases: the laws of Moses regulating the marriage relation, and his statutes concerning the cities of refuge.

Do unbelievers impeach Christianity when they show defects in these laws? Not in the least. Do we defend Christianity and do loyal service to the truth of God by attempting to vindicate these laws on the basis of Christianity? Not in the least; so doing we stab religion.

## CHAPTER VII.

### CHRISTIANITY IS WHAT CHRIST TEACHES.

**W**AS Jesus Christ, our Lord, expounder as well as exponent of Christianity?

Let us consider what the Master says. If we will listen to him, he will make it all plain to the simplest common sense, not fettered by a notion of its own as to what doctrine ought to be taught, or a theory of inspiration one feels bound to defend at the risk of the truth itself. One day certain of the Pharisees, captious and unfair in debate as all self-righteous and conceited people are; who when hard pressed in argument will "hit under the belt," and in emergencies lie; whose spirit was not better than that of our Lord's adversaries to-day, sought to entrap him with cunningly devised questions.

Let us read the account, Matthew xix. 3-9: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

Never since civilization emerged from barbarism and animalism was the answer Jesus made to his cunning foes more worthy to be considered than

now, when our divorce laws are so infamously loose that marriage may be annulled and damnation introduced into homes for well-nigh any cause, real or factitious. If there be some "incompatibility of temperament," some knowledge of the laws in force in the different States of the American Union, some shrewdness in management, and a little money, divorce is easier than dissolving a business partnership.

It is a damning shame and curse to us, these easy divorce laws; enacted and enforced for the most part in the interests of mere animalism. We are sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind; dragon's teeth for a harvest of devils. Deeper and deeper into the body of the nation strike the roots of this malignant cancer. In the long run it is more fatal to virtue than common whoredom itself, for this last defies law while the other invokes it. There can be nothing worse for chastity and social purity than a law that fosters vice and makes easy infidelity to marriage vows.

Why should the rapid spread of this devil's doctrine of easy divorce surprise any not fools? If materialism be the true philosophy, thought being only a "secretion of the brain as bile is of the liver," volition being absolutely determined by changes in mere matter as chemical results are de-

terminated, then what are men and women but brute beasts that have got more out of heredity and environment than hogs have been able to get? After some millenniums more, the evolution-materialistic hypothesis being true, why may not hogs and human beings change places? If materialism be true, men and women are only superior beasts; if we accept agnosticism, they may be.

To the Pharisees our Lord made answer for all time. They that have ears to hear let them hear. "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

The cunning, trap-setting hypocrites thought they had Jesus fast: "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" The luminous answer of Jesus cannot be misunderstood: "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

Jesus teaches explicitly that the law of Moses

on the subject of divorce was not according to the divine ideal. When God made a pair, a man and a woman, he meant monogamy, not polygamy; he meant also lifelong fidelity and relations unbroken.

But what does Jesus say of these laws of Moses as judged by Christianity? He, the brain, heart, conscience, and will of Christianity, says of these Pharisees and their followers and imitators of to-day: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

Yet our heathenish divorce laws are enacted and enforced in the face of this unmistakable decision of the Son of God who will also "judge the world." And many traitors to their King and Saviour take the name of Christ upon them and, just as infidels and despisers of Christianity do, procure divorces for "incompatibility of temperament," or for other reasons unsanctioned by their Lord, and marry again as inclination or animalism or business interests determine; just as the savages of the wilderness did before the time of Moses. Among these rebels against family life, social order, and the kingdom of God are the

devilish seducers who talk flippantly to other men's wives of "technical virtue," of "conventional purity," of "vows made before men not binding," of "finding one's affinity and complement," with other such putrescence of thought and language. Among them are novelists who describe men and women who love the wrong men and women, and talk of "a higher law" than the words of the Son of God.

To all such heretics, sinners, traitors the awful words of the prophet apply with their utmost force: "Hell moves from beneath to meet thee at thy coming."

And some preachers, with full knowledge of the facts, are cheerful parties to this sort of open defiance of the word and will of Him they call Saviour and Lord! When fear or favor or social custom or money can bring to pass results like these it is time indeed to tremble for the ark of God.

Jesus no more approves the divorce laws of Moses than he approves divorce laws now of force in the United States. What Jesus says gives us the attitude of Christianity on this subject; whether with its far-flashing search lights we look backward upon the desert or round about us on our own lives to-day.



As to Moses the obvious meaning of our Lord's reply to the Pharisees is this: Moses was dealing with a people just out of Egyptian bondage, not yet emerged from barbarism and saturated with low conceptions, accustomed to the revolting practices of their sensual masters, the blood of them still poisoned with the traditions and customs of the desert tribes from which they sprang.

Moses was a man of sense and a practical legislator. Providence had been long drilling and training him for his high office and ministry of lawgiver to Israel, and through Israel to all mankind. Moses knew his people and their antecedents and how much they could bear. Under divine direction he adopted a code of laws best suited to their conditions and most effective in their elevation. He understood what many to-day do not understand: that legislation affecting moral questions that are very far above the moral development of the subjects of its enactments is incapable, under ordinary conditions, of enforcement; and if enforced, simply through arbitrary power, is more harmful than useful.

The laws of Moses on the subject of marriage and of womanhood itself, though far below the Christian standard, were a very great advance upon the savage customs that went before him.

He tempered, in mercy to helpless womanhood, the old brutalism that made her relation absolutely dependent upon the savage master she called husband, to whom, with as many others as he could feed or employ, she belonged, and upon little higher grounds than his ownership of his ox, his ass, his sheep, or his desert tent.

Moses made the best laws he could enact at such a time and for such a people. As to these dark times and unenlightened, unspiritual people, St. Paul gives us a glimpse of the pity and patience of God. He was trying to lead the cultured Athenians to turn away from their countless idols that day he preached to them "in the midst of Mars' Hill" "Jesus and the resurrection." Of those ancient times and their darkness he says: "The times of this ignorance God winked at;" in divine compassion on his poor and ignorant children he overlooked many evils what time he was doing all that could be done to lift them into purer light, higher truths, and nobler living.

So, in his measure, felt Moses the man, taking counsel with God in all he did for his people. He knew their manifold faults and weaknesses, yet loved them like a father, and, as God favored and guided him, taught them the alphabet and primers of religion. Moses never claimed that

his laws on marriage and many other subjects were perfect; Jesus Christ expressly declares that they were not.

Of these laws Jesus said: "In the beginning it was not so." It was never the divine ideal of human life; hence, under Christianity, which recovers from the kingdom of darkness more than was lost in Eden and restores redeemed humanity to "the image of God" in which man was first created, these laws were not only lacking, but fatally defective. But they served a useful end and prepared the way for better things.

Jesus does not formally repeal them; he leaves them where he found them—statutes for a time gone by and that now only served the purpose of useful history.

What is here set forth has nothing to do with any theory of inspiration, and few things are less useful than a theory of it. The discussion simply recognizes facts, the common sense and comprehensive intelligence of Moses and the gracious uses the Spirit made of his gifts and experience in preparing a code of laws that, although not on a level with the teachings of Jesus Christ, were yet the best and fittest laws possible for the "peculiar people" this wonderful Hebrew was raised up to

serve, to teach, to govern, and to drill into the semblance of a nation.

Let those who seek to impeach Christianity by declaring (what Jesus asserted eighteen hundred years ago) the imperfections of the Mosaic laws touching the relations of the sexes follow Christ, if they dare—and they do not dare—in his deliverances on this subject in the sermon on the mount. *What Jesus Christ teaches is Christianity.*

His words search the heart to its abysmal depths: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.” This is what Christianity says to men and women. X

To the religion of Jesus the thought of impurity is sin. He passes beyond the external life of which men take knowledge; he goes into the innermost secrets of the heart and demands purity there. How these words of the pure Christ blast—as lightnings blast—the hypocrisies, lies, and bestialities of those who talk of “free love,” as if men and women were only brute beasts of the field! F

While it is true that the imperfections of the

Mosaic laws on the subject of marriage do not impeach Christianity, this is also true: to live by these laws now is to repudiate Jesus Christ and to be damned.

The principles set forth above as to the relations of the laws of Moses concerning marriage to Christianity apply in many directions. One other illustration only is offered at this place: the laws of Moses concerning "the avenger of blood" and revenge.

Read what the great lawgiver ordained in establishing "cities of refuge." Are these Christian laws? No, but they were immeasurably more Christian than the immemorial unwritten law that had held sway among the desert men without let or hindrance. In the laws establishing the "cities of refuge" was a germ of justice, a throb of pity, and a gleam of mercy; tempering the old law of personal or clannish revenge and introducing the elements of judicial investigation and procedure, in determining questions of guilt or innocence.

Did Jesus say these laws were perfect? or that they harmonized with Christianity? He did not; nor did Moses. If we want to know what Christianity teaches, we may easily find out. Let us listen to him: "Ye have heard that it hath been

said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

Jesus no more approved the revenge that found play and opportunity within the laws of Moses concerning the “avenger of blood” than he approves a modern vendetta, or lynching, that defies the laws under which we live and that we are sworn to support and obey.

These instances, from among others that might be brought forward, are used only for illustration. If we take for Christianity what Jesus Christ says it is, there is no danger of confusion of thought or conscience about Old Testament laws, or teachings, or deeds of men of any age or nation. Just as there is no danger to us of to-day from warring creeds and infidel notions so long as we keep close to him. But if, as to the class of laws and deeds under consideration, we attempt out of mistaken reverence for a volume to defend them as on a

level with Christianity, we commit several errors that may become most hurtful to us and to others. We forget the facts, we mistake the divine purpose in a gradual revelation, we contradict our Lord, and, if we should undertake to live on the plane of the Mosaic economy, we destroy morals and repudiate the gospel, which is the flower and consummation of all that went before.

The Old Testament history, as well as the Mosaic system of laws, is of priceless value, but for what it is and not for what it was never intended to be.

It shows how long and patiently the God of history and providence has sought to bring his children to the knowledge and practice of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. It contains laws, statutes, regulations for civil and religious life, which, though in themselves imperfect, yet prepared the way for Christianity. It also contains laws and principles of universal application and for all time, vital with the truth that is good for man's soul and that abides in its integrity firm as the Mount of God.

These Old Testament records not only show forth the mercy and patience, the justice and holiness of God, they also show how hard of heart his children have been in learning that only God's

truth saves and blesses mankind. The history is also full of object lessons, forever fresh, vivid, and instructive, that teach and illustrate the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the glory and blessedness of "religion that is pure and undefiled." Those who wish to know the truth of God—the truth that saves the souls of men, saves them by making them free from the power of sin and the fear of death—will turn to the Bible as instinctively as the eagle turns to the sun to find his way through the heavens. This truth they will find nowhere else, for nowhere else has it been revealed. Men have tried hard to find a substitute for Bible light (as they have tried to find a substitute for God), and many times they have announced an "invention" surpassing all that had gone before and meeting the wants of men. The cry has been, "Lo, here! and Lo, there!" When we have gone to the substitute for the light and heat of the truth of the Old Bible, we have found only some smoke and gray ashes from short-lived bonfires; or the feeble, fitful flashings of fireflies on the edge of swamps on summer nights. The wisest and best men of all time have been like glorious Plato—a great soul was he—wearied and baffled with long and fruitless search for God and truth, longing for and prophesying the coming of a divine teacher, "sent from



God," who could teach the very truth as to God and men.

Without special inspiration, yet under God's providence and overshadowing Spirit, men accomplish very great results. Men were created with the power to do wonderful works in the sphere of their activity, and it has always been true of thoughtful, sincere, and earnest men, trying to be men indeed and in truth, and not mere animals of higher organization than beasts, that "the inspiration of the Almighty giveth men understanding." He who "girded Cyrus, though he had not known Him," has given wisdom and strength to hundreds who have, although ignorant of the overruling Providence that governs all worlds in the interests of humanity, worked out the plans of God.

These words can only mean—and it is most precious—that in all his struggles after true knowledge, the mystery of nature and of himself, the truth as to rights and wrongs, the good God helps men—heathen as surely as Christian—by enlightening the understanding, encouraging the spirit, and sustaining the will. God is in all history; only in Bible history we see more clearly his guiding hand. But this is not the same as the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, which alone, in clearness and energizing power, reveal man to

himself and God to man. Such discoveries man is not equal to; they must find him. By help of mathematics and telescopes he may discover distant worlds invisible to the eye; by microscopes uncover millions of forms hidden to human knowledge from the Creation; by science, applied to the mechanic arts, he may finally subdue nature to his uses; but of himself man never did, does not, cannot discover the truth that saves the soul—that is, saves the man.

Sin disqualifies man for finding out for himself the truth that saves. If he were not under the taint and blindness of sin, his other limitations demand help if he is to know the truth of God; if sin had never entered the universe, man nevertheless would have needed Jesus Christ—"the Word made flesh"—to "show him the Father."

The truth of these statements turns on matters of fact: Christianity alone changes the hearts of men. Other systems enlighten, stimulate, and develop men—great and illustrious men—as in ancient times among Greeks, Romans, and other mighty peoples, but they do not change men. Only Christianity so much as conceives of the "new birth."

When we have tried them all we find them all failing just where we cannot afford failure: in

power not simply to improve man's manners, but to change him and so make him free from the grip of sin upon mind and heart, upon conscience and life. The truth man needs science cannot find by searching in the secret treasure houses of nature; for science deals with matter, and man is spirit. Philology cannot find it in the grave of ancient word roots, for saving truth was never in them. Historical criticism cannot find it, for it also, with pick and shovel, digs among graves where dead things have been hidden away. Philosophy cannot elaborate saving truth by the analysis of human faculties, or by taking account of its own conceptions, for philosophy cannot get beyond the range of the mind itself, and God is infinite.

We want, as Plato wanted, and all noblest, deepest souled men, a teacher "sent from God," who is yet a man; one who is of us, and yet divinely above us. It is true now as when St. John wrote the words: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

In Jesus Christ "was life; and the life was the light of men." This light shines as the sun in his strength, though every other light, from every other teacher who ever lived, should go out.

It is true to-day as of old: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SCARING THE ELECT.

IT is plain that certain "heresy trials" of 1892 and 1893 have "stirred up the pure minds" of not a few of the "very elect;" also scared some into terrifying dreams of a creed undone and a Church destroyed.

There has been noise enough, if noise had power, to wake the nations underground. With firings and cross firings, the "shoutings of the captains," and neighing of war horses "pawing in the valley and smelling the battle from afar;" interminable word-war about what some good men, long dead and never inspired, supposed they meant by certain forms in which they molded their notions concerning the Word of God; with charge and countercharge, accusation and denial, prosecutions and defenses, contempts and resentments, a long and confused engagement of tongues and pens; intermixed with blast of fog horns, shooting of signal rockets, sonorous bursting of tight-blown bladders, supposed to be full of dynamite, to be "handled with care" lest the "foundations be

destroyed," leaving only a hole in the ground; taking it altogether, an uncommon uproar well set forth by these mixed metaphors and jumbled statements. Yet "all things continue as they were from the beginning;" a true statement now, even if misapplied by the scoffers of St. Peter's time. While the battle waxed its way, with advances and retreats and maneuvering for position, to its uncertain and confusing ending—temporary truce rather for repairing damages, refurnishing ammunition trains, nursing the wounded and burying the dead—the Philistine press had fun enough to last a year; also putting shekels in its purse.

But these same Philistine editors had gleams of true doctrine flashing along the dark hills and through the fog-shrouded valleys that Church people would do well to ponder. Standing up, as true Americans must, for the fullest right of free thought and free speech, yet some of these same Philistine paper men, with old-fashioned notions of common honesty sticking in their kidney, have suggested that when a man employed by a Church as a teacher finds himself conscience driven to war upon the faith of those who furnish his bread and butter, he should also find himself conscience compelled to "step down and out." "Men of the world" commend such sacrifices for conscience'

sake on the ground of common morality; one hardly need to be religious to do such things. When those they feed to do certain things insist on doing opposite things, "men of the world" take measures themselves, and on the ground of common business sense "put them out." None of the great parties keep in office a man who wars on the party that made him or fires on the flag intrusted to his keeping.

A preacher who is religious, finding himself in hopeless disagreement with his Church on any of the fundamentals, will for Christ's sake walk out, though he walk alone to the end.

Things that are very small in themselves sometimes look very large when seen through a mist. Much also depends on the eye and its relation to things observed. The old hunter who threw away his faithful rifle was disgusted with himself and, by some curious working of his mind, with the whole human race when he found that what he had so long been shooting at as an overgrown coon in a tree top was only a small and despised insect, like those that plagued the Egyptians, no stranger to him (*pediculus humanus capitis*), entangled in his eyelids.

Sometimes imagination creates a panic, as when the Amalekites fell upon each other, cutting each

other's throats, at sight of the suddenly revealed torches and hearing of the dissonant blare of horns of Gideon's three hundred. That night Israel panicked Amalek; sometimes the uncircumcised panic Israel, and swords tempered only for the foe are turned upon friends, to the devil's joy, the grief of our Lord, and the consternation and hurt of his people. Sometimes it is worse, as when Christians, of set purpose, fall upon each other. From the old "book of Judges," a thousand years before Christ, comes down to us a scene to be remembered. The cowardice, cruelty, and butchery of that day may well give us pause when, "instigated of the devil," we are about to fall upon each other.

The pronunciation of a word turned the scales for life or death; as in later times, after Christ, the effort of men to settle by metaphysical analysis and mere word definition the mode of the hypostatic union of the Holy Trinity rent the Church in twain.

The children of Israel had a fight among themselves. At the close of a battle day the whipped-out Ephraimites sought to escape beyond Jordan. Jephthah and his Gileadites made hot pursuit, outflanked the defeated and stampeded army and got to the fords of the Jordan first: "And the Gilead-



ites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites; and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over, that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; then said they unto him, Say now *Shibboleth*: and he said *Sibboleth*: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.”

There had been an old grudge; Ephraim had been unjust and cruel, it may be, to Gilead; and now Gilead's turn for vengeance had come. But on this day of slaughter and woe at the fords of the Jordan everything depended on the vocal organs: poor Ephraim could not sound the *h*, and the *h* dropped out was heresy unto death.

What lies back of the battle lines in our recent heresy trials is what scares some to flight or surrender on the spot. It is more terrible to the fearful than “an army with banners;” to some a scarecrow more goblinish than all the infidels, scoffers, materialists, evolutionists, and agnostics rolled into one; like a huge snow man by the roadside—stampeding country colts and half-trained steeds—but sure to melt to the last tiny

crystal when the "unconquered sun" returns in his course; the name of it being "*The Higher Criticism.*"

What a fine phrase it is! It has a *distingué*, *dolce far niente* airiness, as if of foreign travel and cheek by jowl familiarity with all the "dons" of all the universities of the Old World; on the face of it a certain disdain of common folk; tone, manner, accent, gesture—above all, *pose*—proclaiming an "imported, thoroughbred, and registered" High Mightiness, most paralyzing to some.

When a plain man of common sense, good digestion, sincere heart, and healthy conscience, who, all his life, has found the bread of life in the good old Book his mother gave him before she went to heaven, ventures to say, "Keep your hands off the ark," then we shall see a sight to make little dogs run after their tails, or raise a sneering laugh outside lunatic asylums. "High Mightiness" smiles pityingly at him, after the manner of aristocratic snobs, out of whose blood has gone the heroic quality of ancestors who gave them life; leaving them only the name and form of greatness—thin veneer over common sham—the soul of nobleness evaporated long ago, as in Matthew Arnold, following the stalwart Knight of Rugby, with dilettant musings about "sweetness

and light" as substitutes for the power of God through the Holy Ghost.

Then "High Mightiness" smiles again, and with a little shrug of the shoulder says to this brother of his—brother though held in contempt: "See here, my man; this high function is ours. For us the ages have been in waiting. We have been initiated into the mysteries. Note a certain odor of mustiness clinging to our garments, brought back from old libraries; also scent of tombs. You common folk do well enough. Plod on; sow and reap and serve gentlemen for what wages they will pay. Take care of your family; love your wife; send the children to school. Look well to the under-drainage and boil all the water you drink; microbes abound, and even spring water is not fit to drink. Receive what we give you and ask no questions. Be grateful to us for living, and take off your hat as we go by."

Then for a time, if he have with him a "friend from abroad" or an adolescent theologian to talk to, he will discuss "comparative theology" or the "evolution of religion."

And these little "High Mightinesses" scare some good souls into fits. The roar of a bull gorilla in African forests is not more terrifying to naked pickaninnies than a sneeze from the bou-

doirs where "Higher Criticism" is wont to air itself, or rest after its exhausting labors, to some amiable people who imagine they think they really believe in God;—God out of them—poor bleached souls—gone or going gray matter of the brain, stiffening in the back, grip or sight of conscience; personal experience of religion leaked out already.

Truly and soberly this much talked-of "Higher Criticism" is like the Mikado of Japan in other days. He was shut in from the people and shrouded in mystery. People stood in awe when "Mikado" was heard, and would have fallen on their faces at sight of his nightgown. They feared because they knew nothing about him. When once they had sight of him, lo! he was flesh and blood of insignificant type. Men die no more of terror when Mikado is named. Well for him now if he can so much as keep his little head on.

High Mightiness—with an awful reserve of troops—makes one think of that weak and foolish book called "Robert Elsmere," the poor priest posing as a man, losing his faith by browsing in a library most wonderful and mysterious, where he found books no others had ever seen, with soul-compelling arguments never known before; books brought together from the four quarters of the earth by an "old squire" knowing more than the

ancients and the moderns; the whole of it a big shadow made on the wall by clumsy fingers to scare little boys with. And thousands swallowed the raw stuff in the book because the papers published commendations from grand old Gladstone, who had seen the day when his great name could not have been used to indorse such folly and poison as "Robert Elsmere" carried into many homes and hearts.

Enough for laymen in Dutch learning (out of which, as from a vast swamp land where rivers carrying malaria along their courses have their rise, has come into theology more fog and less light, more sound and less sense, more vagaries and less truth, more doubts and fewer beliefs, than from the combined ignorance and learning of the rest of the world) to know that Dutchmen, as expert and learned in the dead past and its dead tongues as any of these destroyers of other men's faith, affirm to us in substance this: First, half what the destructives say is not true. Second, the other half, if proved, amounts to nothing.

In German universities men, drawing pay as "Professors of Theology" (where this phrase is not equivalent to teachers of the Christian religion they are breeders of moral pestilence), keep going a continental debating society for the fun it gives

them, or the money their books may bring; probably the latter—these men are not humorists.

They will discuss anything conceivable, or inconceivable. Much of their debate is as foreign to the Word of God and the gospel of his Son as the subject of declamation in the village debating club, as set forth in "Georgia Scenes" some forty years ago and published by the elder Harpers: "Whether popular elections are determined by internal suggestion or the bias of jurisprudence."

Such a question would keep these Germans busy in two universities; with answers, rejoinders, supplements, and footnotes in new and revised editions.

What are the men of the sort here mentioned good for? What right have they to pose as preachers (perhaps they do not so common a thing as preaching the gospel) to a sinful world? They would arch their eyebrows till their big spectacles dropped off the end of their noses were one to presume to ask them such questions. Some of them would not know what was meant.

Were a committee of them in session, considering the latest suggestion as to the attacks on the Bible, it is chiefly their employment to make, or even one of them reading his last "destructive"

lecture to a class of youngsters called theologues; how one, like the jailer at Philippi, under mighty conviction of sin by the Holy Ghost and in mortal terror of hell, rushing in on them while they are deep in debate over roots and stems of dead words or absorbed in experiment with some new unbelief, with his heart-rending cry, "What must I do to be saved?" would demoralize, disgust, horrify, and upset them all! Some one would ring for the janitor and have the crazy man put out. Better so; he would fare better with the janitor; he would not perhaps mislead him.

No man called preacher nor set of men meddling with theology deserve Christian respect who would not know what to do and what to say to such a man as Paul and Silas brought to salvation, in the midnight darkness in the dungeon of Philippi.

And yet these German muddlers of theology speak the language of that hero and reformer, Martin Luther, who fought the world, the devil, and Rome for soul-freedom and salvation, throwing his heavy iron inkstand at Satan—horns, hoofs, forked tail, and all—when he thought he saw him stealing into his place of study and prayer. These moderns fling the inkstand at Moses. Why not elect Mephistopheles Dean of the Faculty?

A scholar who does not teach Jesus Christ is

out of place as a professor of theology; such a man, undermining the "faith once delivered to the saints," and drawing his support from endowments created by men of faith in God, is not an honest man; he is more than an infidel, he is also a traitor.

If theological schools of America are ever to come to this devil's business of seeding young minds for future harvests of infidelity, may Heaven's lightnings blast them! If men with more learning than personal religion fill their Faculties, they will come to it.

Flocking about these German rationalistic "professors of theology" are regiments of young men said to be "studying theology!" If in the lecture room they hear the sort of stuff their teachers put into their books, Heaven help them! And these teachers, no longer watching the polar star, but taking observations on chance lights along the shore, are supposed to be teaching theological navigation!

To get "degrees"—alas the itch for them!—the young fellows must prepare "theses"—big name for exegetical, metaphysical, or other school "compositions," crammed full and tight with what goes for learning. In desperate effort to be "original" in fields worked over and out by their predecessors,



and following the example of their very famous professors, they must write something strange, if not true. Their penchant seems to be to attack the Bible; it has a look of boldness and mental vigor. There is something in their method after all; nothing brings notoriety to a preacher so quickly as attacking the Bible; except possibly committing a crime.

So they get an evil bias—many never recovering the balance of good common sense, and unaffected, fervent, working, fruit-producing, man-saving, experimental religion.

If, on leaving these breeding nests of unbelief, they would only go into some honest business for bread winning they are fit for, and leave a sort of lecturing—misnamed preaching—alone, it would not be so bad. But they go forth scattering evil seed “while men sleep,” and the “tares choke” the seed of the kingdom.

It is not worth the ink it takes to remind this writer that all German professors of theology are not like these “troublers of Israel.” He knows that well enough; but for her true and good men—fighting desperately for the truth of God—scholars, preachers, and workers for God, Germany had gone to the devil long ago and pagan night would have settled on the land of Luther.

Of these unbelieving, doubt-breeding professors of theology it is fair and right, logical and necessary to ask them as one might ask any other who offers his substitute for the gospel of Jesus Christ: What good do you do? What good are you trying to do? Do you bring God nearer to man, or man nearer to God? Wherein have you helped any poor troubled soul of man? Is it really in your plan and purpose of life to help anybody? If you have nothing but idle speculations, nothing that truly helps men to be religious, then write as many Greek and Hebrew grammars and lexicons as may give you contentment, but let theology alone. That is not in dead words; it is in the gospel; above all, in the life of Jesus Christ.

Spurgeon, while in the flesh and now out of it, was and is worth to a sin-cursed world the whole gang of them together.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PUZZLE OF AUTHORSHIP.

FROM the beginning of disputes about religion one trouble has been that not a few—setting up to be lights in the world and guides to men seeking light—have not been willing to accept any statement in the Bible they could not account for outside of it, or any expression of revealed truth they could not compress into one of their little logic-formulæ—maker's name stamped on it—or adjust to their notions as to how God ought to have created the universe and revealed himself to man.

Such men imagine, in the exuberance of conceit, that they have found the last analysis of all mysteries and the final statement of all truth; supposing that they can now marshal all the facts and forces of the universe with all the truths and experiences of all life into their neatly labeled categories.

They conclude complacently: Whatever cannot get into my analysis, whatever has no place in my categories, is not, never was, never can be.

It was a German oculist professor who said to his class at the medical college: "Had I been consulted when the eye was made, I could have made valuable suggestions." Doubtless he meant what he said; egotism is often sincere. Many of these theologian professors should have been oculists; they would venture suggestions even to the professor himself. But as some believe eyes were not made at all, only evolved, so others teach that Bible religion is only an evolution, and prove to themselves that God could not reveal himself to man if he wanted to do it. And to such idiocy some people listen with awe.

All this is about equal to Hume's notions concerning miracles; David is only the shadow of a name now, but in past times he was a terror to many. David—the more fool was he—believed he had caught Christendom in his logic-trap. It was thus: What is contrary to experience cannot be true. If his notion was good for anything, it was good all through, and comes to this: Creation is impossible because against not only universal but eternal experience. Because God had made no worlds he could not make them; if he could make a world, he could not prove it. Yet in our young days saints wailed aloud when thumped over the head with this blown bladder of a philos-

opher. Hume's argument cut a great figure once; it is now found in old libraries among intellectual curios, like plaster casts of extinct beasts of a forgotten time, interesting but harmless, teeth and claws all out. Now they tell us that God cannot reveal himself to man otherwise than in a pantheistic way through nature! They have but one reason for this notion: they can't see how God can do it!

How often the old Book has been overthrown—they being judges who have prized at notions of their own concerning the Book, as if notion and Book were identical! As some confound their notion of God with his existence, overturn their notion and write “atheos” after their name, as they say poor Shelley did on an inn register in the Alps—of all places on earth to deny God!

Such men, arguing down their own notion of the Bible, have supposed that the end was near. Having pulled the lanyard to their little gun—charged with charcoal, imagined to be earth-splitting dynamite—they stepped back to feel the world shake. But there is no disturbance in heavenly places, and the next eclipse comes to time.

No writer makes the world shake; but an egotist thinks he can, and the anticipation makes him delirious with delight. And he believes it does shake; to borrow a characterization of a panic-

hunting person from a witty friend, "he mistakes the rumblings of his own bowels for the premonitions of an earthquake."

But the old Book abides with men and in their hearts and homes. It is dearer to more people to-day than ever before. It never had such a grip on human attention as now. Its rule is wider and diviner than in any age since the first verse of Genesis was written, and that verse means the truth to more reasonable people than ever before. Overturned every decade or two; new and patented levers being prized on with all the united force of ignorance and learning gone wrong, of sin and conceit, the Bible is like a cube: as big and high one way as another.

This is the one Book the world will not willingly let go; the reason is it will not let men go. It is not only the divinest, it is also the most intensely human book ever written. It takes hold of man at every possible point of contact. It soars with him to any height he can reach; there is no abyss so deep that it does not follow him to the bottom. Man cannot get away from it; it stands with him from his cradle, and walks with him to the judgment seat. In story or statement, precept or promise, there is no good in human life it does not foster; no evil it does not war upon to the death.

As to the greatest things of this life or the life to come—the nobleness of goodness, the degradation of sin—heaven and hell, it contains all that man needs to know.

As to the defections from Christianity the world is under many delusions. Defections are largely advertised because news; the story of a preacher's crime sells papers almost as a "prize fight" does. Fidelities go unmentioned; it is not news to tell of a thousand ministers, faithful pastors of God-fearing Churches, preaching the gospel and saving souls. Most people know more of Judas Iscariot than of St. Paul—founder of modern civilization.

It is the heterodox pulpit that has newspaper space and notice. When a "backslider" quits the gospel to lecture on sociology or Shakespeare, for some months his talks will be quoted; it gratifies curiosity and sells papers.

A little town with an ecclesiastical episode comes to mind. A bright youngster, glib of tongue and of dramatic temperament, had respectful consideration for the sake of his position as pastor of one of the evangelical Churches. The villagers were startled out of their proprieties one day, to learn, without warning, that the young man had thrown down his charge. A Sabbath evening afterward he lectured in the town hall on

the "New Theology." There was not standing room; the papers gave him columns for a time. When it quit paying they dropped him—ungrateful people they were. The next year he was "picking oranges" for a living. A steady-going man of sense filled the vacancy, and the Church moved on as a river does when a schoolboy tosses a stone into it—to see the splash.

Defections from the faith are uncommon, but largely advertised. As 1892 was dying a young man stepped out of a steamer at an American port. He had gone away as a missionary; he had come back in disgrace. That story can get notice the world over; not the brave army in the heathen field taking forts for Christ and holding them unto death. It is never news to say that a missionary is faithful. Fidelity, loyalty, sacrifice—so humble and real that it is without the least sensational tone or coloring—Christian nobleness—these high virtues are commonplace; how can papers get news out of everyday virtues like these?

Defections from the faith are like scandals in society. A husband gone wrong, a wife dishonored—the "news" trembles over a hundred thousand miles of telegraph to night editors waiting for the "salt" that is to put some taste in the



morning paper. But millions of good fathers and snow-pure mothers are sleeping in virtuous and happy homes with their babies about them, and this is—commonplace. It surprises nobody to learn that people are good.

The day before entering on this chapter the mail brought to the desk a sensational circular from some concern, three thousand miles away, doing some sort of paper "syndicate" work. The circular sets forth that a number of "distinguished and representative men in high position had been requested to give their opinion in short articles on the small attendance at churches." The "bait" in the invitation was in the high-sounding adjectives.

This writer could say his mind on the subject in short space; the thing to be explained does not exist. The attendance at the churches is not small; it is not falling off; it increases year by year. Never since Christ ascended to heaven did so many people sing praises to him in the sanctuary, or trust him for all times, for this world and the world to come.

Words confuse the thinking of many; perhaps we have twice, or ten times, too many words. Fifty years ago men and women not Christians were simply called "sinners." Except among

roughs there are no sinners now—the word is not polite when used seriously. They are “people of the world”—a phrase bearing the same relation to “sinners” that “being in the Church” has to being “converted.” But we have “liberals,” “evolutionists,” “agnostics.” There are so many names nowadays taking up the old word “sinner” that some imagine there is a vast defection from the Church. Men that talk of “land slides” from the Church do not know history, nor the simplest footings of the census tables. The ignorance of many who write about religion and the state of Christianity is not only dense, it is deep. It is not a defection from the Church when sinners call themselves agnostics; the new name does not, in the least, change conditions. The Church outgrows population by many odds; comparing statistics of Church and nation in America, the fathers of 1776 were pagans to us in 1893.

We have nowadays “much ado about nothing,” concerning theories of inspiration and the authorship of certain books of the Bible. Such subjects of debate impress people by the mere sound they make; like a Chinese dinner gong that, with noise exciting consternation, calls hungry passengers to the “remains” of a poor dinner, discussed sufficiently the day before.

It is strange that so many overlook the important and essential fact that the truth and value of inspiration do not in the least depend upon anybody's theory of inspiration. They forget that it is not in the least necessary to have any theory about it at all. A theory necessary to the truth of inspiration must itself be inspired. No sane men claim so much for their theories. Few of the unnumbered millions who have found their way through this world's wilderness by the Bible's holy and steady light ever so much as thought of such a thing as a theory of inspiration, or even considered whether there could be such a thing at all. They were satisfied with the truth that fed their souls. As well ask a baby, looking its love and trust into its mother's eyes, to theorize about maternity before believing in the maternal breasts. One might demand of the baby, nestling close and warm as it goes to sleep in maternal arms, to fix on a theory as to how the mother revealed her love to her beautiful and beloved child. And this mother did reveal her love; else the baby had not known it nor trusted in it.

The baby loved its mother because she "first loved" it. Theory of mother love! or of God's love (he is Father and Mother) indeed! Such love is too large for definition, too fine for words.

It is incongruous and absurd to talk of definition. As well weigh in scales the odors of sweet flowers, the sparkle of dewdrops, the songs of happy birds. True love, whether of best man to pure woman, good mother to trusting baby, loving God to helpless sinner, never yet had difficulty in revealing itself.

The Bible and the universe have fared alike. We have many theories as to how the universe got going; it is going, theory or no theory; none of them of least account except the statement in Genesis—God made it all. The Bible no more depends upon a theory of inspiration than the universe depends on a theory of its origin. These are questions of fact. Here is the universe with man in it and adjusted to it; here is the Bible in man's life and adjusted to it.

But making theories has given endless amusement to men of leisure for such play. But theory makers have not upset the universe, nor so much as modified any of its facts; from the power that holds suns in their places, to that which brings back the violets when winter is gone.

We are told (with the air of a smart boy who, having, as he thinks, completed his demonstration on the blackboard, writes "PROVED" at the bottom and looks around at teacher and class for

praise) that Moses did not write all of the Pentateuch, and that Isaiah did not write all of the book that bears his name! Whereupon some saints turn on the "fire alarms." With others there is "wailing and gnashing of teeth," calling for "committees" and other signs of mortal fear, as if somebody had convicted Moses and Isaiah of falsehood, and so made an end of Christianity.

If Moses and Isaiah were blotted out, Christianity stands; Jesus Christ is Christianity. But who said that Moses wrote all of the Pentateuch, or that Isaiah wrote all the book that is named for him?

Their High Mightinesses of the "Higher Criticism" launch their notions into the Church and await results; as artillerists, in field practice, watch through their glasses the effects of shots—missing, glancing, or striking the target plumb. At such a time timid people should keep their mouths wide open, if they listen; it hurts the ears less. Else they should hold their breath, count their beads, or run away. Some do all these things at once. Common people are more than sneered at—seeing they are not experts in dead word-roots and other such misleading obscurities—if they so much as presume to think at all, or doubt for a moment, whether these deliverances are true; or if true,

ask what it all comes to. Many theorists do not know that blank cartridges make as much noise as if the powder drove home a ten-inch shell.

Into the dead learning of the "Higher Criticism" one, with only a "Jack-Knife," must not enter, but some things are not beyond the reach of ordinary common sense. One of the arguments for many authors of the Pentateuch and of Isaiah is like this: The style, even idioms, of these writings in the earlier and later parts differ widely. A man with sense enough to keep out of the rain may consider such an argument. Let it be so; how many Thomas Carlyles could one prove by this test? There is the essay on "Burns," "Sartor Resartus," "Chartism," "French Revolution," and Froude's butchery of the tough old Scotchman called "Memoirs." There were certainly four or five Carlyles, maybe a full dozen, according to this wonderful canon of criticism. Must a man of genius, culture, wide experience use the same style forty years on forty different subjects to prove his identity? A very common sort of writer—like some of those who throw stones at Moses—may do it; not men of genius like Moses and Isaiah.

But what if more than one writer is responsible for the Pentateuch? What if Moses wrote some

parts and compiled others? Edited some? Dictated some to a private secretary?

No sane man supposes that Moses wrote the last chapter in Deuteronomy. But what hurt comes to Christianity if half a dozen men, fit for such work, contributed to the Pentateuch; or as many contributed to the book that bears Isaiah's name? Suppose the notions and guesses of their "High Mightinesses" all proved—what of it? What truth of history does it contradict? What doctrine of Christianity invalidate?

Does Moses say, "I, Moses, son of Amram and Jochebed, wrote all that is in these five books?" If so, where does he say it? Does Isaiah say, "I, Isaiah, son of Amoz, wrote every one of these sixty-nine chapters?" If so, where does he say it? And what other writer, among the canonicals, affirms these things of Moses and Isaiah?

It is Christianity, and not a theory of inspiration, nor of the authorship of certain books in the Bible, that we are fighting for. In what least particular would a dozen pens in the Pentateuch, or twice a dozen in Isaiah, affect Christianity? There, in the evangelists, is Jesus Christ. He is Christianity.

The value to us of the sacred volume does not

depend upon the pens that recorded it, but upon its origin and its contents. The question of moment is this: not who wrote all these books, but what truth is in them. The indorsement Old Testament writers receive from Christ, from the evangelists, the apostles, is on their truth, not the names of the men who wrote the books. Whatever in these writings—no matter who held the pens—is in harmony with Jesus Christ and his teachings, is true. If ever any man should find in any of them something that contradicts him, or antagonizes his teaching, it is false.

What theory of inspiration or authorship, or anything else, ever hatched from infidel or other eggs, touches the Christ? or, anything he said, or did, or proposed to do, or now actually does before our eyes, every day in every nation, for all who “come unto him?” Jesus Christ is the supreme test of truth: truth in word, in deed, in motive, in life. Moreover, whatever makes plain, illustrates, or enforces any truth of Jesus Christ is good to the “use of edifying,” no matter where it is found.

Many utterly false things are in the Bible; put there because they are false, in order that we may see the nakedness of the lie and turn from it forever. As, for example: the devil’s theory of vir-



tue in the opening chapters of the book of Job. It is worthy an inspired writer to put it in his book to show us what the "father of lies" believes, that we may know what is false and better understand our foe. In the Ecclesiastes are many things as false as any coarse infidelity of our own times. The writer speaks at times as a materialist, an atheist, a pessimist, a lunatic. The oft-quoted phrase, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity," is a pessimistic libel on the virtue of good men and pure women and the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence. It is false in every pessimistic wail it makes. But it is invaluable—the whole book showing what comes to a man who departs from God.

Speaking of the book of Job—who wrote that? What has authorship to do with this wonderful and sublime drama, setting forth God's ways in dealing with man? Nobody knows who wrote it, and our utter ignorance of its authorship does not in an infinitesimal degree discount the value of the truth that is in this marvelous book that holds its grip on our times, as if it were first written for our benefit. The old notion was that Job wrote it because it bears his name. And so we might have made Ruth responsible for the love-idyl that is named for the beautiful and faithful Moabitess.

As well say that "Anabasis" wrote the story of "The Retreat of the Ten Thousand" because that is the name of the book that tells the heroic story. Suppose Xenophon did not write it, or that somebody helped him; what of it? If there were no guess of its authorship, unbelievers would not care, seeing that "Anabasis" is not a Bible book.

As to "Job," some say Solomon wrote it, some say Moses. This writer inclines to Moses, but it is a matter of no consequence what any writer thinks, since nobody knows. Maybe some nameless sage and poet of the desert wrote it. No man knows and no man need to care for one moment. We have a book full of what we need in such a work.

What ado we have had about the authorship of the Pentateuch and of Isaiah! As if anybody knew who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews! Some say one, some another; many believing that Paul wrote it (only because they think *he* could have done it), but nobody knows. But the Epistle we have, full of truth and grace—no matter who wrote it. Suppose we did not know that Charles Wesley wrote "Jesus, lover of my soul," would our ignorance of its authorship discount its value to faith, to hope, or to love? Some of the best

hymns, through which faith, triumphing over suffering, ever sung its raptures, are anonymous. So of many of the noblest and most spiritual psalms, and many precious writings in the Bible. Since we find instruction and comfort in "Job," "Hebrews," "Ruth," and other scriptures without the least idea as to their authorship, why should we distress ourselves if somebody thinks several pens were employed on the Pentateuch, or Isaiah?

David's name does not make the twenty-third Psalm what it is, nor does the name of Moses enter into the inspiration of the ninetieth. The Psalms hold their grip on the human heart because they interpret all its religious moods, because they scale the heights and sound the depths of religious experience before the coming of Jesus Christ. Always they will teach men heavenly truths of the human heart and of God.

If we read them in the light of the sunburst of truth that came to man with the manifestation of God in Christ Jesus—the Holy Spirit helping us mightily—these Psalms will mean more to us than to those who wrote them.

Since Jesus Christ has shown us what "the Good Shepherd" is, the twenty-third Psalm means more to us than to him who had kept Jesse's sheep

about the hills and valleys of Bethlehem, and who sang it to the accompaniment of his sweet-toned harp.

This babble of tongues about the authorship of the Pentateuch and of the prophecy that bears Isaiah's name should not disturb our serenity. The question for us is: What do these and other scriptures teach us of truth that is according to the mind of Christ? The other question, "Who wrote them?" it is not necessary to ask. If we should find the answer, it might be interesting; it would not be important. For it would rob us of no truth we now have; it would not enrich us with a new one.

## CHAPTER X.

### “THE LETTER KILLETH.”

SOME good people, as we have seen, are shocked into fright—easily mistaken for religious indignation—when it is intimated that all portions of the Scriptures are not of equal dignity and importance. Ignorance and superstition may, without suspecting it, worship a volume instead of an image.

He has but dim conception of the great truths of the Word of God who counts a mere list of names—wherever found—or the story of a battle between Israel and the Philistines, as in the same sphere as the Decalogue, the Prophecies, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse; or puts Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel on a level with the “Songs of Solomon,” or the book of Proverbs on a plane with the Gospel of St. John.

Such notions put Moses on a level with our Lord and sink St. Paul to that of Balaam—a kind of prophet not without successors—who seems to have been damned for greed of gold.

An old “Puritan divine” once took the word “pomegranate” for a text. Dissecting the fruit before the congregation, he made each seed represent what he called a “Bible doctrine;” meaning in reality his notions as to how God ought to regulate affairs and therefore probably does. The vain creature—supposing himself to be profound because he was obscure, strong because he was much in love with his own theories, and logical because he was dull and dogmatic—used the Scriptures to air his own conceits. This is a horrible and sacrilegious use of the Holy Scriptures; yet such a man—vain and shallow egotist though he is—would groan at the intimation that Solomon’s “Song” is not equal to the Epistle to the Romans.

When men read into a Bible text simply their notions, or experience, they had as well set up to be inspired. Better do it; it would be more honest, leaving their claims to stand on their own merits. For example, David prays in one place in the Psalms: “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.” A man, going to and fro under an irresponsible commission of his own—a sort of religio-financial manipulator of protracted meetings; an ecclesiastical privateer on the high seas without even “letters of marque” from any recognized king, potentate, or republic; this

person expounded David to mean: "Save me from wrong judgments about this doctrine [*his* doctrine] of holiness and from opposition to it."

Possibly he was deranged.

This may be an extreme case. But every Sunday men do like things; some most noted ones, whose declamations have newspaper "publication in full" by "press syndicates"—with gold to them therefrom—so use God's word; the text being "stuck on" at the top like a quotation from Horace, as a motto for one of the Addison papers. If a man has no use for a text, he should let it alone.

The evil practice spoken of is a sort of irreverent punning; a most contemptuous and contemptible way to treat the Word of God.

Famous names and popular applause cannot redeem such treatment of the Scriptures from the sin of sacrilege. Uzziah, to parade himself before the people, undertook the priest's office, and was smitten with leprosy for his sin. But miserable sinner that he was, he had the grace to flee out of the temple. There were two sons of Aaron slain for offering "strange fire before the Lord." Moral leprosy is not so easily detected, else the people might serve sacrilegious punsters on holy words as they served Uzziah—help his running, thrusting him out with disgust and horror.

It is the business of a preacher to bring out of God's Word the meaning inspiration put into it. If he cannot do this, let him quit what he calls preaching. Reading into the Bible simply one's own “notions in general” is to insult God and rob the people. A man has no more right to suppress the manifest sense of a text, or to warp it to fit a certain view—substituting his notions for the divine meaning—than he has to forge a text or a whole Bible. This was perhaps the view Joe Smith took of the matter when he invented a Bible to suit himself.

We hear talk nowadays about the pulpit losing its hold on public attention and respect. If this be true, the reason is not far to seek. When men cease to expound the Scriptures to give the mind of the Spirit, and only use a text as a catch phrase at the beginning of their lectures concerning *their* mind, the people treat them, and justly, as they do other lecturers—grade them simply by their “drawing power.”

Treating every part of the Bible as of equal value with every other part is not reverence; it is folly and superstition. At bottom sensible people, except when “a debate is on,” do not so use the Bible.

If we wish to know what God's saintliest chil-



dren really believe on such matters—and they have the best right to opinions; if we want to know what spiritual intuition makes plain to them, turn the leaves of their long-used copies of the Word of God. We see that every page has been read; the thumb marks show where their love has lingered.

Mother's Bible! A preacher's daughter she was; from her childhood she knew the Scriptures. In her age she was the family "concordance." She could quote accurately more scripture than any preacher known to her children. Some parts of the Bible she had read but once; others her soul grew fat upon. As the evening came on there was divine light round about her till the shadows left the valley of death. Toward the close she spent most of her time in the Gospels. She walked to and fro with her Lord in relations most confidential and heavenly from the manger at Bethlehem to Olivet when he ascended to heaven, "to prepare a place" for her and all who love him.

There can be no doubt as to what mother thought—without talking about her thoughts, or dreaming that there was any need of a "theory" about so plain a subject. She knew the Bible pastures and fed on them as she would. Even the poor sheep—finding a bite here and there,

from brier buds or young leaves on scrubby bushes on the hillsides, useful to them—for tonic maybe—yet know where the lush grass grows, whether on mountain tops or in the valleys, find it and are satisfied. God be thanked! this old-fashioned mother, who “dwelt in the secret place of the Most High and abode under the shadow of the Almighty,” taught her children where and how to find in the wide pasture ranges of revelation food for their hunger and water for their thirst. And this writer would not give her practice with God’s Word for all the theories of inspiration ever spun out of learned heads, fuller of conceits than of the truth that sanctifies and saves.

Hungry souls need not be troubled about the war of words over the Book. They know where to find that which is “sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.” Let them go on eating honey; for them God put it where and as they find it.

The inspired writers have given us no theory of inspiration; it is the utterly uninspired who manufacture our theories for us. These man-made theories may be discussed without irreverence, just as we might discuss theories of taxation.

The Bible statement is simple, full, and misleading to no pilgrim seeking the path of life till some man, full of himself and his opinions, reads into

it what the sacred writers never dreamed of, a theory of it. Until some theory-maker bothered him, no Christian ever misunderstood St. Peter's words: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

And sincere souls need not bother about the theories when they have heard of them; their authors are no more inspired than common folks. Terrible are Peter's words that follow closely those just quoted: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

Peter says nothing—no inspired writer says anything—about an inspiration so minute and so mechanical that every record of fact, every recital of

history or experience, every statement of principle, every exhortation to repentance, every appeal to gratitude, every promise to faith, every confirmation to hope, every incitement to love, was in word, syllable, and letter absolutely dictated so that the sacred writers were not related to inspiration in any way except as this pen point is related to this paper; or as a phonograph to what is talked into it for simple repetition. Good and gifted and holy men were “moved of the Holy Ghost,” and, under his influence and guidance, so wrote as to give us the truth of God. The “how” of the Spirit’s moving on and working through human spirits Peter says nothing about; probably because he knew nothing—any more than Moses knew of the how of creation. It is not reasonable to believe that Peter ever raised any question as to the divine method in inspiration. And it is an idle question; we do not know the *how* of anything.

The sacred writers were not phonographs, we may be sure, giving out only what was put into them, with nothing of their own. Their individuality is preserved in these writings; what is peculiar to their gifts, temperament, habits of mind, occupation, education, experience—all appear in their writings in the most natural way, as one without a theory to defend would naturally expect.

The only essential thing is, "moved of the Holy Ghost," they have given us the truth of God that makes man free and saves him. The proof of its divine truth cannot possibly depend upon anybody's uninspired theory of it. Jesus Christ and his teachings give us the only and the supreme test; whatever contradicts him is false.

Why should any lover of the Bible contend one moment for a mere verbal and mechanical inspiration?

Had it been necessary, in order to giving man saving truth, God would, we cannot doubt, have used "holy men" as mere pen points. In that case holy men would not have been necessary; one man would have done as well as any other—if he wrote a good hand.

But this was never yet God's way with men, when they speak, or write, or work for him. God never suppresses the personality of his servants. Not in Moses's time, nor Isaiah's, nor Paul's, nor Luther's, nor Wesley's, nor "General" Booth's, of the Salvation Army—with better right to his title than many much-decorated divines to theirs—has God used men as machines. St. Paul in his great statement of "the gifts" bestowed on the Church recognized and emphasized the differences in men; their talents, acquirements, quality, and work.

If we are to stand fast by the phonographic notion of mere word-repetition, we must go farther: we must have the same sort of inspiration for copyists, translators, editors, printers, proof readers—all. It is equally important to secure verbal and syllabic precision now as in old times (provided there ever was anything of value in this notion), and far more important now. In old times few could read, and no layman dared read for himself. Copies of the Bible were so few that one was worth a king's ransom. Now they go forth to the people—the men, the women, the children—by the million. There never could have been a reason with God—who tells us that “the letter killeth”—for mechanical preciseness of repetition except as it was necessary to secure in this way saving truth to mankind. That Jesus had no such view his practice makes plain; he rarely quoted from the Old Testament literally; sometimes he simply gave the sense.

If the least possible inaccuracy might be fatal in the first writer, why may it not be fatal in the first copyist and in all who come after? In such a view what must be the responsibility of those who multiply a single copy into millions? Great books have been written giving the “various readings” in the different versions. There are some thou-

sands of them; nearly all about words, letters left out or dropped in, no more affecting any fundamental of belief than various spellings of his name prove that Shakespeare never existed, that he did not write dramas, or that there were a dozen of him. It is wonderful, indeed, that no corner stone of doctrine, nor one single Bible teaching as to rights and wrongs, is in the least affected by the many various readings—which have disturbed the peace of saints who supposed they were believing a truth when really they were stuck fast in a notion as to how they got it.

Some years since the London Bible Society resolved to place a copy of the Word of God, rendered into the native tongues by learned and good but not inspired men, in every house and hut in India. And there are more than two hundred millions of people there. Some day such a work will be done in Africa; maybe three hundred millions there. Some day in China with its four hundred millions. Some day in all the world with its fourteen hundred millions. The London Society and our own, the American Bible Society, the noblest benevolent and Christian institution in the Western World (what an unspeakable shame and sin that the American people should suffer this noble House of God—the “Bible House”—to suffer lack of

means to feed earth's hungry millions!) will put the Word of Life into every house in the world, whence it is not thrust out.

How noble the conception that enlarges the minds and warms the hearts of the great and good men who conduct these grand Christian enterprises! How a man like Paul would have comprehended the vast significance of the work they do and would have helped them with all his might, “taking up collections” for them in Macedonia, Corinth, Ephesus, everywhere he could have touched the heart of gratitude for God's great gift to man! What revolutions—upturning hoary superstitions, upsetting idolatries as old as Chinese calendars, introducing Christian civilization, and so “making all things new”—will follow the entrance into heathen thought and life of this wonder-working book of God and man! No wrong can stand before it; nor darkness; nor meanness; nor tyranny. Archimedes thought he could move the world with a lever fitly placed. The Bible does move it—turning things upside down to get them right side up.

But if saving truth must depend upon mechanical preciseness, or upon the Bible's being given to man according to any human theory of it whatever, how awful the responsibility of men who translate



the Holy Word into heathen tongues! and how sad and terrible the fate of millions who, seeking the light of God, must find it in books with imperfect translations—not graver than some in every translation or copy ever made!

Unless translators were inspired, a word not exactly the equivalent of the original might give some local coloring to the statement from the translator's mind; by inadvertence he might drop out, or misplace, a name in the long lists of Leviticus, Numbers, Ezra, Matthew, or Luke; or he might get the figures mixed as to the numbers engaged or slain in battle as set forth in Kings and Chronicles. Like as not early copyists did precisely this sort of thing, and so left something for men to dispute about. As if such things made the least difference in settling the everlasting state of any child of Adam! The learned tell us that a very little difference in markings, in "points," in Hebrew letters—used as numerals—would change tens into thousands. Fly specks are big enough to account for some of the various statements as to "numbers" that have so terrified men, stuck fast in the letter. We have not yet sounded the depths of the Bible maxim, "The letter killeth," no more than of that other, "It is the spirit that giveth life." It is simply absurd to make a bother over such things, as if they

affected the “inerrancy” of the Scriptures as to any truth needed for salvation by the human race. It is not like God to make Christianity or the salvation it brings to man depend upon verbal “inerrancy” about matters indifferent, any more than upon a mode of Church government, or of baptism, or any other *thing*.

Such demands of the Scriptures; such ado and outcry about words, spellings, mere numbers of men fighting or killed, would, under the old tithe system of Moses, have required an apothecary’s scales to determine just what was the “tenth” of “anise and cummin seed.” Jesus gave his opinion of such ado about nothing with great freedom and plainness.

Such outcry about notions about nothing remind the writer (the illustration has dignity enough for the thing under consideration) of a sprightly but light-headed pullet in her first experience with the egg question—so upsetting to science as well as pullets. Peeping about for a nest, she came upon a porcelain egg. Supposing that she laid it, her joyful cackling roused the barnyard into responsive chorus resounding far and wide. Most of the noise was sincerely sympathetic, but it was noise only; no egg except this porcelain deceit and lie.

Hens have their differences in character; some

are unduly excitable; some cannot be excited at all, outside of a "fixed idea." The author owned a hen once—in Oxford, Ga., what time a little play helped to lighten the weight of a burden too big for him—not to be forgotten now. She clung to her "theory" unto death; incubating a brickbat till her legs were paralyzed. And so she died; falling into paresis and subsequent atrophy—the breaking down being first clearly indicated by paralysis of her extremities; the whole trouble being produced by a mild but persistent insanity produced by a "fixed idea," a pet theory, as to the possibilities of a brickbat. She died at last of "heart failure." She was of "foreign extraction," and ought to have been buried at the foot of some graves that could be pointed out.

Mere differences in different reports of numbers fighting or slain in campaigns against the many enemies of Israel—especially seeing that we have not a full history of them, but only brief and fragmentary accounts—no more weaken the truth that saves, dim the divine splendors of Christianity, nor touch the proofs of the Godhead of Jesus Christ, than variant statements as to the number of British soldiers Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown would prove that the Revolution was not fought to a finish and into the independence of the thirteen colonies.

If life or death depend on any theory of inspiration ever advanced, then the theory itself must be inspired, in spirit and in substance, words, letters, and punctuation points.

Let one who can bring on the proof of an inspired theory and confound common folk as Moses confounded Jannes and Jambrez in the court of Pharaoh. Let the snake swallowing begin. If not, let him hold his peace.

In China to-day it is a vexed and unsettled—perhaps never to be settled—question as to what Chinese word translators shall agree upon as the equivalent of God. That question is soon to be debated on, prayed over, and settled, if possible, by a conference of the best Sinologues in the empire. The very best of them are divided on three different words. It troubles and perplexes these true and learned men. Also generates some heat; but there will be no “heresy trials.” It is not so bad a case as many suppose. The truth of God will be saved in its vital and vitalizing integrity and power, no matter which term is finally selected. For the word, no matter which they select, is now pagan and connected with idolatry. But it will be civilized and Christianized. The miracle of the sweet orange graft, giving us luscious fruit in spite of the wild, sour root on which

it grows, will be repeated before our eyes. The gospel will Christianize the word for God that the missionaries select. When Chinese readers learn of Christ who and what God is, their poor old word will be transformed and transfigured; then it will mean to them, as it means to us, the one God and the everlasting Father.

The principle to stand for is this: the Bible gives us God's saving truth. This truth no more depends on a theory as to how it came than the existence of the universe depends upon a doctrine as to its origin. The universe is here; so is the Bible and its truth. This is matter not of guessing or arguing, but of fact and experience, as really as the ripening of grain is matter of fact. Its saving power no more depends upon a theory of its inspiration than it depends on a sinner's understanding everything it contains; and no man ever yet understood it all, as no man understands all the facts and mysteries of God's great book of works we call nature. Men are not saved by all the truth in the Bible or out of it, but by the Holy Ghost energizing in them the truth of Jesus Christ they do take hold of and make their own; above all, for the faith and trust they have—not in any words, or theory of them, nor yet for belief in a plan of salvation—in a Person it is all given to

reveal, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Brother of man. And millions are saved with crude and unworthy ideas of him; nobody ever had adequate conceptions of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ magnified the spirit of truth and set little store by form of any sort, whether of words or worship. As we have seen, his quotations from Old Testament writers were rarely literally accurate. He repeated parts of his discourses and varied the statements just as any other natural, unaffected, and free-minded preacher would do. The little verbal differences, so much talked of and written about, no more disturb the Christian system than the fall of a rose leaf to the ground affects—outside the theory of gravitation—the course of the stars, or invalidates a calculation that foretells to the second an eclipse of one of Jupiter’s moons.

Poor old Eli “trembled for the ark of God” that day Israel fled from the Philistines, and with reason enough. But it is silly—and easily becomes wicked—to tremble every time somebody revamps an old theory or airs a new one we do not accept. Eli’s trembling came too late; it should have come upon him when his wicked sons, Hophni and Phinhas, lived off the Church and yet led the people into sin.

We have occasion for trembling ourselves; not

lest the uncircumcised take our ark away, but lest we ourselves desert it. One preacher, false to the truth, does more harm to the cause of Christ than a dozen priests of Dagon making war upon it. If ambition for place, thirst for power, or greed of gold control one called to preach the gospel, he becomes an incarnate heresy more hurtful than all the infidels having access to his flock. If he hold the truth of the gospel in word only, his people will starve under his ministry. If he give his people something other than the gospel, he is like one breaking ground for the sower, who is "an enemy," coming after him; after this plowman come all manner of unbelievers "sowing tares."

A pulpit, half-hearted about the fundamentals of doctrine and experience, preaching religion in a perfunctory manner, and laying itself out on other themes than salvation through Jesus Christ, is an incubator for hatching infidels. If nobody else will take such men in hand, let their congregations, being starved and poisoned too, turn from them. It is a duty to our souls and to Christ Jesus to refuse audience to men who "handle the Word of God carelessly," not "rightly dividing the word of truth."

So long as scholars pervert learning to render the gospel obscure; so long as "professors of

theology ” spend their time among graves, “ seeking the living among the dead,” whether in graves of dead heathen words, of patristic fathers or denominational saints, or exhaust their force in speculations concerning what God has not revealed—giving a minor place to expounding the everlasting gospel, so long will their work be destructive to “ the faith once delivered to the saints; ” so long will they introduce subtle and deadly poisons into “ the body of Christ, which is the Church; ” so long will they seduce believers to “ cast away their confidence ” in the Saviour of men; so long will they betray young souls to forsake the “ city of God ” with its full “ river of life,” for a waste “ wilderness where no water is.”

The worst foes of religion have been bred and fed in theological schools. Out of such training came the “ Scribes and Pharisees,” who “ made void the law through their traditions ” and conspired to slay the Divine Teacher, the white light of whose all-revealing truth exposed their hypocrisy.

No such hurt has ever come to the Church in our times as has come from German rationalist professors of theology and the men they have sent through the world inoculated with the deadly virus of their learned unbelief. Compared with the evil influence in the Christian world of these men,



Voltaire, Paine, Hume, Bolingbroke, and the others of their day; the whole tribe of scoffers and blasphemers of all times and the materialists of our times, are but children in mimic war.

All this is no argument against "training schools" for "young prophets;" it is an invincible argument for them. But it is an argument from the facts of history, against training schools that do not train preachers of the gospel. It does bring forward a reason why no man, however wide and deep his learning may be, should ever have place and bread in any school of the Church who has not more religion than theories about it; who does not in his thought and conscience and love magnify Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of mankind.

Some say these views are narrow. Be it so. In the sphere of light and life truth is as broad as the vast spaces where the stars move in solitary splendor; but toward error and sham and falsehood and sin, truth is narrow—narrow as the Christ who said: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

## CHAPTER XI. ✚

“AGAG CAME DELICATELY.”

A MOST pitiable sight is the blanched cheek, quaking knees and chattering teeth—goose bumps, as country folk say, coming out on the skin—of some called preachers when a big infidel comes to town, or when some other publishes a book supposed to be loaded with destructives to the men of faith. Some men have been seen to pale as if for flight at mention of Darwin's name; reminding one of two lines in a little speech small boys were wont to make Friday afternoon in village schools a generation ago:

The British soldier trembles  
When Marion's name is told.

A little preacher, clothes *en regle*, has shown a look of awe at the sound of Herbert Spencer's name.

This man, much worshiped by his followers and feared by weak-kneed disciples, as high priest and head Tycoon of the agnostics and their next of kin, the materialists, has written more nonsense in obscure English than any man of our times.

Among educated men the world never saw so sublime an egotist as this amiable Herbert. But egotism must not be reviled; for some uses it is a great gift—dogmatism for example. Lacking so many essential facts and mystifying himself in speculations about so many things, egotism alone could sustain his spirit through his busy and barren life.

Spencer serenely rests in the belief that he has achieved results in this world; perhaps given men a substitute for Christianity.

In his far-fetched and chaotic manner he dogmatizes about “First Principles” and philosophizes about “Sociology,” seeking to find somewhere bed rock on which the race of man may lay its foundations, yet so as not to cumber progress with the thought of God, or of immortality.

At the other end of this column this Herbert leads—although he may know them not—are communists, socialists, anarchists. Logical they are; not cultured enough to hide their thoughts, they speak out their minds, and put the conclusions involved in agnosticism, materialism, and the rest of that scientifico-philosophic lunacy, into words—upon occasion, also in deeds. And why not? If man be only a superior beast, it is only a question of teeth and claws. The only point to guard is on

the line of prudence; consider the strength and temper of the police. The better-developed biped-beasts will also consider how best to foster their own interests, and selfishness is the only basis of anything that may be called goodness. In communities of such beings fear controls some—greed others.

A convention of French socialists, meeting in Paris, first of all agreed on this: “Resolved, That the first thing necessary is to get rid of the idea of God.”

The gang led by Spencer and his set have done what they could to help the socialists carry out their resolution.

In Chicago some years ago it was dynamite. That startled the world. Dynamite is common now; and the art of making it is no longer a secret. What an intellectual and moral “valley of Jehoshaphat” Spencer and the rest have made with *their* “Data of Ethics”—a dreary and thin book, God and immortality being left out—and other such stuff as they could furnish, old and outworn, new and untried, all dumped together as Jerusalem ordure and offal were piled in heaps; fermenting, steaming hot, smelling to heaven, and requiring fires that never went out by day or night. And human beings, not yet in lunatic asylums, are

asked to walk out of the Paradise of Christianity and camp there!

Science is good and most helpful; it is first ally to religion and a blessing to men. But science is one thing; men, however learned, spinning out endless cobweb theories in the absence of facts—they are not science, nor are they scientific.

Consider Spencer as standing for the whole lot; they seem to count him head doubter and chief creed-smasher; what single contribution has he made to the real betterment of mankind? Has he kindled one steady, clear-shining light that may guide bewildered mariners out of dark and stormy seas to any sure haven in this world or any other? No; this man puts out lights. Has he helped any perplexed soul out of its jungle of doubts? No; this man is a professional breeder of doubts—as miserable a business as any poor sinner ever yet engaged in. Has this man inspired hope in any despairing souls? No; he is a strangler of hope, a “thug” to spiritual life. What has he done that will help earnest men—concerned for the world’s health—to drain off malaria-breeding swamp water out of human society? Nothing; he creates swamps.

What has he offered to us that will so much as help to the solving of any vexed problems, the set-

ting of any exigent questions now debated throughout the civilized world, in white heat of bitter contention? Nothing. He could not; agnosticism is as sterile as ignorant. A man trying to evolve out of his brain (an “organ secreting thought as the liver secretes bile” they teach us!) a moral and social cosmos, leaving God and the soul of man—“made in God’s image”—out of the process; what can he bring forth? Only what is in him and such as is in him.

Silly Aaron, when Moses smote him with burning words for helping the people back into Egyptian cow worship—God working wonders in heaven and earth to pull them out of it—gave for answer: “The people brought their gold; I cast it into the fire, and *there came out this calf.*”

What did Israel owe Aaron for false leadership? What do poor, unhappy, hungry, and sinful mortals owe Herbert Spencer and his herd of horn-blowing followers? From not a few—ignorant and afraid, cowed by his “multitude of words without wisdom”—he has “taken away their Lord,” and in the chill mists and darkness of agnosticism they “know not where to find him.” And this is the only sure thing he has done; except that he has given a certain respectability to unbelief it never had before, and that blatant and ignorant blas-

phemers who have audience in slums grow bolder, noisier, more brazen. Is there anything this Moses of doubt and spiritual ignorance offers to such as follow him into a drear wilderness where no manna, no drop of dew ever falls and no "pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night" is ever seen? One thing he has certainly done: he has put better clothes on infidelity. Men and women, restless with only the primitive fig leaf for covering, now wrap themselves about with folds of purple and fine linen, and do not call themselves sinners any more.

His gong-beaters call by vile names such as do not bow the knee as this king of philosophical Bedlam "makes a progress." Be it so; as many as have not been hypnotized by the name the Philistine press—some silly preachers helping them—has given this man of many words and unreduced nebulosities also have an opinion of them; they are very thin, very narrow, very ignorant, very sterile.

This egotistical, self-asserting, cold-blooded Herbert is here mentioned only because he is by his kind set forward as head "medicine man" and "rain-maker" for all the lodges of his tribe. After him a troop of little ones. Such views of Herbert Spencer will be pronounced ignorant, narrow, fanatical. Be it so; this writer asks nei-

ther favor nor quarter from that set. He would rather have the approval and prayers of his old black “Mauma,” “Aunt Esther,” who “walked with God and was not; for God took her,” than the praises of all that crew. These men, to the utmost of their ability—no matter what they have intended to do—have “troubled Israel.” There is nothing sacred they have not reviled, nor holy they have not profaned. They have added to all the evil tendencies of our times. They have added nothing to the moral forces of the world. They have done nothing to strengthen the dikes against the cruel sea that threatens Christian civilization; they have torn down as many as they could. They have treated the Church with disdain and the Word of God with contempt. They have sneered at the One Teacher who has brought the light of saving truth to a world in darkness. The whole force of their influence has been delivered against Christianity. They have added nothing to human life but doubt and sin. What honor do they deserve from those who truly believe in Jesus Christ? Who truly believe in God and immortality? Who truly believe in the eternal distinctions between right and wrong? Who truly believe that Christianity is the last hope of a sinful and unhappy world?



Nothing in this world is sillier, less logical or scientific, than to follow blindly the lead of men who do nothing, have done nothing, attempt nothing; who honestly declare that they can do nothing to help men where they most need help—in matters of rights and wrongs, of sin and salvation. To follow blindfolded and without question is idiocy. It is sensible and it is necessary to ask of any man setting up to lead a new Exodus: "What can you do? Where are you going? How can you get there?"

If he has for answer, "I don't know," *stop!* One thing is certain; if there be no hereafter, as materialists teach—concerning which supreme problem ("If a man die, shall he live again?" question older than Job) the agnostics, with fine disdain, decline to think at all—then for them and all the work of their hands is mortality only. For nothing, not the law of gravitation, is more certain than that no book or career long holds a place in human interest, belief, or memory even, that does not help men. Fifty years hence "Robinson Crusoe," to say nothing of "Pilgrim's Progress," will have more readers than "First Principles," "Data of Ethics," "Origin of Species," "Descent of Man," and the rest of them. And they will do their readers more good.

Sneeringly answers the Philistine: “Yes, by the common people.” Even so; the common people are not only the most people, but, by odds, the most important people. The common people “heard Christ gladly;” the man they will not hear is soon “forgotten as an untimely birth.”

Books that neither inspire hope nor build up manhood mankind cannot remember. They will be recalled in idle moments as one reads in Trinity Churchyard, in New York City, on crumbling shafts of brown stone, tilted out of their perpendicular and disintegrating under wind and weather, for more than two hundred years, something like this:

“R. I. P. ——— Jones Esq., ———, —163; departed this——— 1 ——— 6— 2: ——— good, ——— father, etc., ———,”

turns away and thinks of it no more; life is just outside the Church gate.

Yet one must be honest and make confession. For these dead and gone infidels—dodged, fled from, or fought by our grandfathers—and their writings, dead and dry as Egyptian mummies; as also for these modern “blind leaders of the blind,” some “professors of religion;” also some “preachers of the gospel,” and “soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ”—as it were, show respect mingled with

awe. Nobler than such a preacher—albeit he is the kid-gloved pet and perfumed darling of an up-town swell society Church and “D.D.” ten times over, is a “Salvation Army Sergeant,” dodging rotten eggs, projected out of darkness from back alleys, while he sings—voice soaring like the lark seeking the sun:

“I’m glad salvation’s free.”

If such a half-and-half preacher chances to come into the charmed circle and near the august presence of one of these self-satisfied sinners—posing as “scientist,” “philosopher,” “biologist,” or even “entomologist” (a denier of God is neither true philosopher, true scientist, nor so much as rational thinker)—a lump comes into his throat and his breathing is irregular! In such a presence this manikin—calling himself preacher of the everlasting gospel of the Son of God—looks sheepish, feels like a fool (for once feeling and fact coincident), and would not then and there avow his “cradle faith” for the world. At such a time—his head slightly swimming—if he ever had an “experience of religion” he has forgotten it, or it has oozed out of him. Such themes as “sin,” “repentance,” “justification by faith,” the “new birth by the power of the Holy Ghost,” the “witness of the Spirit,” “joy in the Holy Ghost,” “the atone-

ment,” “God’s all-sufficient grace,” “heaven,” or “hell” are to his weak head and nerveless soul under “taboo” of “culture!”

Poor little thin-blooded ecclesiastical *dilettante*—now anæmic, red corpuscles all gone out of him—he might possibly, if he ever got his breath and the lump out of his throat, ask humbly the great man’s opinion of “comparative theology!” And if the awe inspirer, having seen something from his pen, should compliment him on his “breadth and liberality of view,” he would swoon from excess of joy. If he should “come to,” he would murmur something about “sweetness and light.”

Such a preacher could listen complacently to Edwin Arnold comparing Jesus Christ with Buddha, and then offer incense by raving over “The Light of Asia.” But to “stand up for Jesus,” it is not in him; his cowardly knees smite together and his teeth chatter as when a plantation negro thinks he sees the devil coming out of a graveyard.

But he will “draw his salary” for pretending to preach the gospel of the Son of God! Miserable little sinner and hypocrite he. Such weaklings and cowards—believing nothing as a real man believes—remind one of a scene, by contrast as well as by resemblance, in the first book of

Samuel: Time-serving, half-hearted Saul—hero and coward by turn as the fit was on him—sent of God to destroy the Amalekites (who ought to have been destroyed for horrible cruelties to Israel—ripping up women with child and other unnamable deviltry), had “spared Agag,” their brutal king, with other valuables—hoping to “make something” out of them. Old Samuel was hot in heart and said to Saul: “Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites.”

“And *Agag came unto him delicately*,” saying, “Surely the bitterness of death is now passed.”

The bowing, mincing, sneaking villain of a thousand butcheries.

As came Agag into the presence of Samuel, so do preachers, in name only, of the sort here considered, come into the presence of world-famed infidels—“walking delicately.” It is a preacher’s business to make the Amalekite do the walking.

If a preacher cannot take Samuel’s sword and “hew Agag to pieces before the Lord” (and if Christ Jesus, the Lord of glory be in his soul, he need not be philosopher nor great scholar to put to flight the foes of the kingdom), he can at least keep away from Agag. If being so afraid that he cannot smite the Amalekite one good blow, nor so much as fling a “smooth stone” at him out of a shepherd’s

sling, he can at least run away. Even he, weakling that he is, need not make terms with the robber chief. Or, if there be no other help for the Church, let such a preacherling change his business and take up something within the limits of his gifts. He might peddle in the *boudoirs* of “society ladies” cosmetics and perfumery.

## CHAPTER XII.

### SCIENCE DOES NOT GUESS.

FOR nearly a generation Haeckel, Spencer, Darwin, and a few others like them, have affected many Christian people as the red flag stirs the bull in the arena in the City of Mexico. Others these names scare into flight or ague, as when the bull gets loose.

Of these scientists, semi-scientists, guessers, dreamers, and world-builders in general, an impression has gone forth among many ordinarily intelligent people that they have "proved their case." And some of their school have humored the delusion.

Very few people have read the books of these famous men; a much smaller number so much as know what their words mean—to say nothing of what they should stand for, ideas.

Thousands are drunk on agnostic ether, without the least knowledge of agnosticism or its cognate follies. Certain newspapers are largely responsible for this state of things. They have an airy and ignorant way of alluding to evolution as if it were theory no longer, but a doctrine now finally

proved and set up, like the law of gravitation, for good and all.

A curious, most illogical, and deplorable result follows with not a few: "If evolution be true, maybe there is no God, and we need not be so particular about our living."

As illogical and idiotic as if a man, hearing that somebody had invented perpetual motion, should conclude that possibly twice two are not four but five, and that men may henceforth do away with the multiplication table. It is not fair to hold all the much talked of men mixed up with the evolution notion—theory it is not, but only badly working hypothesis at its best—responsible for all the absurdities put forth in their name. While many believe in what they call evolution, the foremost of them do not claim demonstration. The missing link is still at the bottom of the Indian Ocean, or elsewhere deeper down than sea-divers go.

It will be forever unscientific to claim demonstration for any theory of things material not subject to scientific tests. Many truths have proof to the reason that are outside the realm of science. In this case of evolution the facts necessary for proof are hopelessly out of reach; they cannot be got at by either of the five senses, and except through these no investigation, dealing with matter, can



come into relations with any subject, or reach conclusions about it. The man of science has foresworn imagination and the right to guess. With things spiritual he has no business; he has excluded himself from the spiritual sphere. What a scientist, engaged in the study of things material, cannot see, hear, feel, taste, or smell, he can do nothing with except to guess, more or less ingeniously, according to the gift that is in him. Spirit is not cognizable by the senses. Every true science illustrates this principle.

Spectrum analysis settles some questions about substances that constitute the sun; combustion is actually seen, though indirectly, and by comparison with other objects observed in similar conditions, and with intuitive faith in the uniformity of natural law, the capable and trained observer knows what is burning in the day king's heart.

Mathematics and the telescope applied to the heavenly bodies under the law of gravitation, determine distances, magnitudes, densities, rate of motion, or orbits; predicting most accurately changes in place and relation. But the heavenly bodies are not out of range of sense perception.

Time was—it will be called to mind—that the Church that then was staked the fate of Christianity on the doctrine (the Church made *that* a doc-

trine!) that the earth is the center of our system. That stretching of poor Galileo on the rack of torture for his views of astronomy was a sorry business, almost incredible now. In our times the method of stretching is otherwise than by the rack.

The chemist, with his laboratory and trained perceptions, has determined the composition, qualities, and utilities of many substances; making all men debtor to him for enlarging the resources and opportunities of civilized life. We may well believe that he has only begun to learn nature's secrets. He has only been on short coasting voyages; the wide sea is before him; the continents are yet to be found. All that he gains but increases his power of conquest; he will yet bring into light, for the honor of God and the good of men, ten thousand precious things locked up from human knowledge from the beginning. What would our modern world be without the chemist? Yet there was a time when he would have been burned for witchcraft. He, more than any man perhaps, is carrying out the original command to "subdue the earth" and "have dominion over it." But he must not get outside of his facts. He deals with things material. He can be sure of nothing that he has not proved; he can

prove nothing that he cannot bring inside the range of at least one of the five senses.

So of the geologist; he knows only what he has proved; he can only prove what comes under the observation of the senses God has given him for finding out things the world has now grown old enough to need. He and the other pathfinders "came in the fullness of time." They would have been of little use till Christianity made the world ready for them. While the gas in the grate warms the room, as these dense morning fogs, cold from the sea, search the bones and the light overhead shows where the pen moves, the geologists are thanked and the God who gave them to a needy world is thanked. Yet in their time of probation, by finding out facts unknown before they scared many pious people out of their natural sleep; perhaps impaired the digestion of some, thus taking them out of a world of knotty problems "before their time." A generation ago there were "wars and rumors of war," marching and countermarching, flare of banners and blare of trumpets, when geologists wrote or spoke. In that day "Commencement sermons" and "addresses" "reconciled science and religion," to the consternation of sincere saints who never had a doubt in their lives. Few preachers knew much

of geology and few geologists knew anything of the Bible. Rhetoric and dogmatism were at their best in those fighting days. O, but they were in earnest!

One of the author's college professors warned him with a frightened look, dashed with pity diluted with much indignation, that questions as to the authority of the "4004 B.C." at the top of the column, first chapter of Genesis, were dangerous to his soul. Another—all but two of the old corps are in heaven now—steered clear of the whole business, as one guards against cholera germs. Here in the room is one of the old geology-smashers, commended to young men a generation ago as a word of final authority; kept now for memory's sake. The scare was honest; many trembled exceedingly for Moses and "the ark of the covenant." Many believed that the fate of Christianity hung in the scales, while the bolder Davids strode forth to meet the champions of Philistia. When one struck Goliath a blow that made him cry out, praises covered him like those which brought blushes to young David's cheeks, and honorary degrees descended on him in rosy clouds.

The geologists, who began studying rocks and things underground, finding themselves fired on,

naturally replied. Some of them being persuaded by religious people that Christianity was against geology (neither party knew any better), and being sure that geology was true, threw religion overboard. Another class (noisy men, sciolists, not scientists) as it seems, hating Christianity on general principles, took up the study of geology in order to find weapons of attack. Most Christian debaters, whether with pen or tongue, stood firmly by the "4004 B.C." as part of inspiration, while geologists were talking about millions of years as the probable age of the earth.

The alarm is about over now. Occasionally some good man, waking out of sleep, fires a shot at a noise he hears; reminding one of a belated fire engine rushing madly to the scene of a recent conflagration and deluging the spot where the fire had burned. Or, as Henry Toombs, surname after the famous Senator's—the sable protector of a small property once owned by the writer—hearing the gate rattle the night of the Charleston earthquake, strode forth from his cabin with his single-barrel shotgun to protect the premises against all foes of earth or air.

Most people have now discovered two important things: First, that the "4004 B.C." were not placed where we find them by Moses, and that

they represent the best ciphering good Bishop Usher—a worthy Irishman not specially expert in figures—was capable of doing in “constructing” a chronology. Recent too; done about 1650 A.D. Does anybody know how this “4004 B.C.” got its place in reference Bibles? By whose authority? Second, Moses says nothing whatever about the date of creation. The eternal Father kept that knowledge to himself as he kept the date of the last day. Yet some idlers exhaust themselves trying to fix the date of the last as Usher did in trying to cipher out the date of the first. As if God had not taught men that his time is not reckoned by our little almanacs: “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

We may count it certain that Moses did not himself know the date of creation. As he was a man of great good sense, we may be sure that he never wasted time nor puzzled his brain over the beginning or the ending of creation.

If God did not tell him, he could not possibly find out; as it was of no possible consequence for men to know when the universe was created, it was in harmony with God’s method in revelation not to tell him. There were thousands of things God did not tell Moses or any other. Revelation

concerns man and his destiny and concentrates its light on two subjects: sin and salvation. Moses understood this; so would we if we were willing to go by the Book, walking safely on the firm earth instead of ballooning in the upper air, where it is very thin, with vague and vagrant speculations.

Moses says in one place: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." What law would knowledge of the date of creation help us to keep? what duty to perform? what destiny to fulfill?

But all this about the long debate (yet this also has its meaning and use) between geology and theology is only incidental to the special point now in hand: geology, dealing with things material, must somehow bring the subjects of its investigation under observation of the senses. Geology, by so much as it is scientific, refuses to guess where it does not know. And it does not assume to know what is beyond its range.

Another illustration of both points is found in the history of medicine. The anatomist not very long ago was a scarecrow to the Church. At sight of him priests, who did not think, or even

know how to think, crossed themselves, counted their beads; upon occasion turned the "Inquisition" loose upon him.

There is a picture of a Flemish surgeon, Andreas Vesalius, born in Brussels in 1516, shut up in a room, doors closed, windows barred, with an awed yet most courageous look upon his face. On a table before him lay a dead human body and he, knife in hand, was making ready to dissect it. Before him they had dissected beasts to find out how men's bodies were put together—most unsatisfactory and misleading anatomy it was. Pope or no Pope, Inquisition or no Inquisition, Purgatory or no Purgatory, heroic Vesalius was going to dissect that body. He did it.

And this man deserves more honor in centennial fairs than any Columbus hunting India for gold, and running upon an island on the American coast—not knowing what he had found.

Science has her martyrs as well as religion. After that bold and unheard of deed, Vesalius had to show himself expert in moving to and fro to keep his head on his shoulders. The "old school of medicine," according to Galen, was down on him; so was the Church. They "hunted in couples," and together sought the life of the bold surgeon.



The "old school" was outraged that progress was possible. The Church of that dark day had an odd notion in its head that *dissecting* the body might make some botherment about recovering all the "identical atoms" on resurrection morning. As if it could be a matter of least concern to the *person* gone out of rotting flesh to ever get back identical atoms: a doctrine of life and death, of resurrection and immortality "evolved" after inspired men quit writing; at bottom a materialistic notion of men who thought personality inhered in flesh and blood. As if God had not graciously promised to the immortal *person* who never died and cannot die, "a spiritual body," and therefore, "brand new."

St. Paul says: "Thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him."

Yet good people have been fighting over atoms—or the place where they were last seen—for more than a thousand years as if the fate of Christianity turned on the fate of these identical atoms. As if immortal personality could be conditioned on any "atomic theory" whatsoever! a theory of immortality, at bottom, close kin to the materialism that denies immortality. As if the apostle had writ-

ten: "Thou sowest that body that shall be." So long as one thinks of his flesh as himself he will never be free from the fear of death; nor can he ever be a man, full grown.

"How shall we bury you, Socrates?" asked one the night they made him drink the hemlock—putting him to death because they did not agree with his religious views!

The sage made answer: "Any way you please, if you can catch *me*." But he meant what few seem to understand: persons do not die.

We begin wrong with our babies:

Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take;

teaching the little innocents the doctrine—heathenish and materialistic to the core—that the body is the person owning the soul, whereas the doctrine of Christ Jesus is, the soul is the person owning the body. The body is not the person, is not even essential to the person. The soul is the person; the soul and the "I" are identical.

Christianity had nothing to fear from Andreas Vesalius, but much to gain through his work in finding in anatomy a foundation for medicine. For Christianity, so far from despising the human

body, takes the best possible care of it; not as the person, but as the instrument the person, the soul, uses in its work in this world—flesh and blood, bones and nerves, mediating between pure spirit and mere beasts and, below them, things.

There could be no conflict in the very nature of things; Vesalius was dealing with flesh and blood; Christianity with soul and spirit. Vesalius knew what he proved; he could only prove what came under view of his five senses—one of them at least. Science must have indisputable facts or she cannot move an inch. It is forbidden to science to imagine bridges sprung across chasms.

The man with the microscope is now to the fore, upturning theories and notions without number. But he also deals with facts observable by the senses; he must see to know. As of all scientists, so of the microscopist; when scientific he imagines nothing. He also must have the bed rock of facts under his feet. Before reasoning about bacilli he must see them. He must not suppose things; he must not imagine himself across an abyss—dark and maybe bottomless—and ask us to follow him, when we need good bridge timber under our feet. Imagination may create poems; it may not supply missing links in any sphere of science.

The providence that delayed the coming of the

microscopist was merciful to men; had he come in advance of anatomists and chemists, his revelations would have been too terrible for human endurance. Now the chemists can help us fight our invisible foes that throng earth, air, water—fire only of the four original elements being free from this manifold, though invisible life that men assume to be all evil; whereas it may all—must all—serve a good function in the divine plans of existence. Without microbes, or bacilli—name is not much—would there be any other life having relations with matter?

Well for the microscopist too that he did not come too soon; revealing things hidden from the foundation of the world, what time certain saints were administering on witches.

One thing they have all found out: not one nor all can originate one living thing. Back of life, life must be, whether of man or microbe, is the conclusion of all true science. Every authority among scientists holds by this creed; spontaneous generation is a thing to laugh at now.

They all come back to Moses, whether they know it or not. God made it all. He is life, and from him all life proceeds. Men can no more create than they can destroy. All human power, reënforced by all nature, cannot destroy one atom;

it cannot create one. In nature is no original force; nature expresses an idea, it is not in itself power, any more than a grain of sand is power.

What is so obviously true of all science is true of what is not science—evolution. Evolutionists must build on facts; there is for them no other way. Real scientists have to plod and plow along in common earth; there is no reason why evolutionists should go ballooning by force of gas. They have no more rights in the world of imagination than have geologists, chemists, microscopists, electricians, and others who are scientists. They have no more right to assume what they cannot prove than even theologians.

Holding the evolutionist to the earth where he belongs, he is in sore distress. The facts that must be put in evidence for the proof of his doctrine are unfortunately out of the way. If the truth must be told, they are out of the country; in point of fact, they are dead these millenniums past. They have been dead so long that autopsy is out of the question; of their grave it may be said as of the burial place of Moses: "No man knoweth of their sepulcher unto this day."

For this worrisome and perplexing state of things Christian men are not to blame; they have not "spirited" the witnesses across the border. In

truth some of them would gladly join a search party for their ancient graves, if there were the least hope of finding them. It would be exceedingly interesting; this writer would delight in such an exploration.

If indeed we have in these lost burying grounds dust of ancestors, we need not be ashamed of them. They did what they could; if they were capable, with their many disadvantages, of evolving us, we have every reason to be proud of them indeed. For their wriggling out of protoplasm, whether by internal energy or help from without, into some lowly but higher form of life that at last, after patiently enduring for some millions of years, evolved into us, their lineal descendants, now having dominion over earth and sea, they deserve the very greatest credit. Men, even of historic breed, seldom do better with their descendants. Their "potency" was equal to their "promise," which is much more than can be said for their biographers.

If we could only find the first grave, how gladly would we contribute toward "a monument fund." Less merited monuments have been built; our protoplasmic ancestors did their best, offered no theories, and did no harm.

The trouble is easy to see; remedy there is

none. Those who need the missing facts to make proof of their notions were not on hand when the facts were. In that far distant time (millions on millions of years back of us it may well be, and why not?—eternity is as long one way as the other, looking backward as far as it looks forward) the sorely perplexed, much tempted, tried, and bewildered evolutionists were themselves locked up in protoplasm (beautiful and euphonious word it is, every way suited for the name of what was never seen, is unknown, and, by informed people, admitted to be absolutely unknowable) which, whatever other “promise and potency” it had, was not, unfortunately, developed to the point of making observations on itself and making scientific memoranda of what it saw. After protoplasm none came following, while the great transition periods were going on, possessing the instinct of scientific observation and the gift of memoranda-making till these times were all over and gone by millions of years. Now it is too late for the evolutionists peering down into the abyss of agnosticism where the “missing link” may be. If there were only any bottom to it—so dark and chill that one is afraid so much as to guess its depth—they would, in their sad extremity, go down to see.

The actual evolutionary process has not been ob-

served; a fact much to be deplored, since few things seen in this world could be so intensely interesting. One kind of being has not been caught in the act of turning into another kind of being. Mules prove nothing; the process stops with the individual; there are no descendants, and evolution is balked. Nature seems to be very obstinate on this subject; she draws the dead line at mules. According to old hunters deer shed their antlers in secret places; so the missing anthropoid—last ape not a man, and first man not an ape—shed his tail where no man could see him and hid it where no man can find it. In that hour of his humiliation and weakness, and yet of dignity and elevation, he was entitled to concealment. Had any, seeking proof of the evolution hypothesis, come upon him in that supreme moment, they should have looked the other way.

“And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father’s nakedness.”

Science sternly forbids her children to imagine anything whatsoever when they are short of facts. To science, imagining facts is the “unpardonable sin.”



“Protoplasm” does as well as anything else—as well as “star dust” for world building—to begin with; in truth anything will answer for foundations when one is building castles in the air. Imagining protoplasm to begin with seemed to many to make the rest so much easier that it brought much honor to him who first thought of it, as the Panama Canal people paid big money to a Frenchman who “suggested an idea,” although it was only “a lottery.”

It would be intensely interesting if some protoplasm—just a little would do—could be found somewhere, from deepest sea or other grave of vanished things, that one might carry it, carefully and tenderly, to the chief estates of evolution. Gladly would this writer serve their need if he could. Would they know it, actually seeing it? And recognize the ancestral germ? To fail in a moment so solemn and tender would be too sad for tears.

Good will come of these ingenious and imaginative people yet. They are also, as it seems, as a rule most amiable; the self-satisfied often exhibit this delightful quality—it is compensation for egotism.

All this work and worry, imagining and dreaming, wondering and guessing—with bold marching

out into thick darkness—cannot utterly fail of some useful end. Nature will not tolerate such outlay without some results. As some explorers show the rest of the world where it is not worth while to go, so these worthy people show us how to economize time. Losing their own time, they save it for others.

Let us wish them well. If they should find something, old or new, hitherto unknown, we will rejoice with them. But they will do no hurt to Mt. Zion. There are no facts in God's world that invalidate any truth in God's Word. God's free children have no reason to be afraid of anything, in any sphere or in any world.

But the evolutionists must not guess themselves across chasms, nor us into them.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MOSES DID NOT KNOW.

THE children of heaven should take life more quietly. "He that believeth should not make haste" to throw away his faith because some other, who has not tried it, avows belief in something else he says he does not understand and in what he confesses he cannot possibly prove.

Nobody who knows anything of the subject doubts whether Prof. Virchow is fully "up" in this discussion. He knows all that evolutionists even pretend to know, and he said, backing his statement with invincible proofs, before the last Anthropological Congress in Vienna: "Since the Darwinian theory of the origin of man made its first victorious mark, twenty years ago, we have sought for the intermediate stages which were supposed to connect man with the apes; the *proto* man, the *pro anthropos*, is not yet discovered. For anthropological science the *pro anthropos* is even a subject of discussion. At that time in Innsbruck the prospect was, apparently, that the course of descent from ape to man would be reconstructed all at once; but now we cannot even prove the descent of the separate races from one another."

Before we revise all our cradle faiths it were well to wait till the creed breakers get through revising one another. For example, Darwin, in a way, recognizes God's existence; Haeckel denies it; Spencer says, "I know nothing about it;" while some eminent leaders in this school avow their faith in Christianity, and each class has a following.

As to results, even in things visible and subject to daily observation, science is yet too young to announce final conclusions. And some sciences, we need not doubt, are now only in process, so to speak, in gestation, not yet born. Mr. Thomas Edison is reported as saying he had "learned just enough of electricity to be afraid of it."

The very text-books, authorities a generation ago, are now put away along with other over-used, worn-out, and broken things. They are in garrets and cellars with three-legged chairs, bedsteads gone wrong, cradles with a rocker lost, faded pictures—once cherished, now tiresome—bats, owls, rats, cobwebs, other rubbish and vermin keeping them company. And these storehouses for decayed things are not full; they are ample and can hold all the wrecked theories which, when exploded, shrink like bursted balloons—taking small room for storage.

We will know better what science contradicts or

confirms, disproves or approves, upsets or sets up, when we know more clearly what science is. Studying a world as old as ours and with so many secrets of life and death in it, science is much too young for dogmatism. If it required millions of years to accomplish the evolution of man, a few years are not enough for the evolving, in the absence of the essential facts, a theory of it for which rational human beings are asked to surrender all things counted sacred. Next to a true Christian, a scientist of all men should be modest; he should know how little he knows. And the scientist is modest; the scientist does not dogmatize; it is the sciolist—charlatan and pretender—who is not modest, who does not know how ignorant he is, who dogmatizes and even swears when he is lacking in facts.

This is no sneer at science, but at pretenders—bearing the same relation to science that hypocrites sustain to religion. What has been set forth is simple justice to science and sincere searchers after truth.

Of all men the scientist knows that the end is not yet—that investigation is only well begun. They are like mine hunters and developers. Some are knocking about among surface rocks; others are sinking shafts—some shallow, some

deep. There is more gold underground in these mining regions than was ever gotten out, and the eager world wants it much. But there are more deep holes in the ground—black night, dark as Erebus down there—left alone in solitary places, than there are paying mines. “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” The best miners absolutely know that shaft sinking in some places means only waste of money, time, energy, hope, and whatever other precious thing goes into it. And the best scientists know—absolutely know—that in some lines of investigation proof can never be; necessary facts, if ever anywhere or anywhen existing, being now irretrievably lost; in evolution, for instance, the working hypothesis making certain facts necessary for proof and then excluding them from the field of investigation, for by the terms of the question the facts existed, if ever, millions of years before the observers who alone could use them in this discussion.

There are also some things that others know—who need not be deep shaft sinkers, scientists, scholars, or men in any way extraordinary, to know them. For example, nothing proved by astronomers or microscopists, geologists or chemists, anatomists or biologists, evolutionists or inventors, metaphysicians or German professors of theology,

invalidates one single truth of the Holy Scriptures. And if there were not secret antagonism to Christianity, men would no more pretend to find in science or philosophy objections to religion than they find objections to Greek art, or doubt that Cæsar whipped the Helvetians. Some witnesses are not candid; some jurors are prejudiced; some judges are bribed, and some deep scholars have no sense.

By this time Christian people should be more composed in spirit when they hear something new. It might be true; in that case they should bid it welcome. If false, it cannot harm them unless they throw away their truth for it.

Experience should give stay and comfort to pious minds. With every new science the end of Christianity has been announced. But Christian civilization soon drills the new science into her service, and to-day guides and controls the movement of the world as never before. It is the most active, energizing, world-changing force now at work among men. Informed people know that in no civilized country is there one sound principle of law or custom that Christianity did not inspire; that there is no bad one that Christianity does not war upon to the end; and believers know that in the end Christianity will put down and out what is

evil and injurious. Jesus said: "Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken; but upon whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

We have become accustomed to astronomers, geologists, chemists—most of all to doctors—and it is now believed that Christianity can live comfortably with them; but the evolutionists are a trifle annoying as co-housekeepers—they want so much room.

Some curious things—and, to some temperaments, amusing things—have come to view while the evolution debate has been going on. The very idea of having ascended, during millions of years, from protoplasm (most pleasing word it is) through countless gradations to great manlike apes, or apelike men, and finally into ourselves, makes some people mad. Why get out of temper about it? There is not enough in it, one way or another, to be excited about. The thing is not yet "proved on us;" no recognized authority claims proof, nor even the possibility of it. It is not yet necessary to reconstruct all the family trees, nor to put an ape on our coat of arms.

But if evolution were proved, or so much as possibly provable, what of it? It really would not diminish our personal dignity. People of noble



blood do not go back of certain men; there is in the backward path somewhere a most lowly dwelling, in which lived, with or without a name, a poor peasant or slave. Tree building cannot go beyond him; account of it to the public stops far short of him. There is no line of noble blood so long but that the other end of it is a thatched roof, a hollow tree, or a hole in the ground. Before the tree builders get there, silence, with or without ignorance, is judicious; if only because our poor ancestors did not know how to spell their own names.

We do not hold a great noble personally dishonorable because a robber chief was founder of his house. Why then should men have contempt for anything between protoplasm and themselves? It were nobler to have evolved from protoplasm, through apes to manhood, than to have had some men and women for progenitors—Henry VIII., for example, or any Russian Czar whatsoever. The ape had less to do with the devil.

At best our bodies are of the earth; why not as well for us, so far as personal dignity is concerned, indirectly through a thousand animal forms as to be made in the twinkling of an eye, out of the earth itself? Any living thing is nobler than any clod of earth; any monkey than any huge pile of

it—as “Old Baldy,” seen from Los Angeles, eighty miles away with his crown of glistening snow upon his head. The evolutionists put the original dirt farther from us—that is all they do.

But the main question is not the “ascent” or “descent” of man; as to that matter we are here, and as we are now at infinite removes both from dirt and apes, the main question is the relation of the human race to Christianity.

Suppose evolution now fully proved and set up in the world among other settled questions—not even debatable any more. What fact of Christianity does it even remotely affect? Is there one statement of fact in the Bible that it contradicts? one single moral truth, one right or one wrong, one human or divine relation that it modifies? Is there one single word in the Holy Scriptures that it invalidates? These questions are asked about *evolution*, and not some of its vociferating advocates or the follies and falsehoods they have put forth in books and in other ways added to the sum total of human folly.

Creation must still be accounted for. Evolution simplifies nothing, makes nothing easier. If such words as hard and easy have any meaning as applied to God, we should say that evolution made everything harder in getting the universe under

way and in keeping it going. Evolution only shoves the problem farther back in time. It relieves no question that ever perplexed the mind. It does not make the origin of things any simpler or plainer. This evolution hypothesis—theory it is not—should trouble no soul of man except those hard-working and unrewarded students who have tried so hard to set it up and make it stay up.

In accepting evolution, with or without proof, the world does not rid itself of God or of the idea of him, nor of any relation in which God ever revealed himself to men, nor of one doctrine of right or wrong taught in the Scriptures, nor of Christianity and its infinitely just and holy claims upon mankind.

What is not self-existent and eternal was made. Some silly people, uncomfortable in the thought of God, have said that matter is eternal; but science is not guilty of this idiocy.

If reminded that some recognized as scientists have expressed such a view, we must attend to an important matter: Consider that a scientist may lie about what he wants to believe, but tell the truth about what he has proved. If matter were eternal, it would be unscientific to assert the doctrine, for science can do nothing outside the sphere of observation. On such questions as the eternity of

matter, spontaneous generation, or twice two being five, science has no advantage over illiterate common sense. If a thousand scientists should assert the eternity of matter, it would be as any other form of words in itself self-destructive; a thousand men of sense would know them to be false and fools. Such statements as the eternity of matter are on a plane with a proposition about a round square or a square circle. It does not require learning to know the absurdity of such things; although one noted chief among unbelievers asserted that *he* could conceive of a "world where twice two are five." Such a thinker could conceive of the eternity of matter; of protoplasm creating itself with the "promise and potency" of all things; of two substances occupying the same space at the same time; of a man lifting himself off the ground by tugging at his boot straps; of anything—except his own folly. Such talk is lunacy or lying.

An old time plantation negro once affirmed to this writer, believing sincerely in what he said and with as much right as the rest of the evolutionists: "If you put a bunch of horse hairs, taken out of his tail, in the bottom of the spring branch, they will turn into young eels."

His view was as good in fact and reason as any other notion of spontaneous generation, a sort of

Congo theory that no respectable man—even playing at science—now stands for. As we know axioms we know—common folk as well as philosophers—that no life comes from dead matter; life precedes all life, whether animal or vegetable. In science and observation, in philosophy and in common sense, this is as commonplace knowledge as the fables in Webster's blue back speller.

Over against all the legends, traditions, guesses, notions, folklore—German, Congo, French, Indian, English, or other—stands like the front of Gibraltar to the sea: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

As to the mode of creative energy, as to *how* God did it, Moses is as agnostic as Spencer. He tells us as little as the evolutionists tell us—that is, nothing. Doubtless for the same reason—he knew nothing. Of the mode of creation Moses could not know more than he knew unless God told him, for God only knew. As such knowledge could in no wise concern the end proposed by revelation, it is matter of moral certainty that God did not tell him the date of either the beginning or end of the universe, or the mode of creative energy. If God had meant to give us these beginning and ending dates, or to tell *how* he made things and persons, it stands to reason that he would have made it as

plain as the statement that he created the universe. Just as it is reasonable to believe that Jesus Christ, had he conditioned the life of his Church on any form of things, of words or modes, would have taken pains to make us understand him, instead of absolute silence on these subjects.

Language, in Moses' time, had no words for conveying ideas as to the mode of creative energy; it has none to-day; it seems certain that the mind could not comprehend such a statement, if it were made; to finite intelligence some things are inconceivable, as well as undiscoverable and unknowable.

The ignorance of Moses as to the mode of creation did not, we may be sure, disturb him; he knew nothing of the mode of his own creation or of his existence. No more do we. It is absolutely certain that the author of Genesis has not told us anything whatsoever of the mode God adopted in the creation of the universe or of anything in it.

God tells us only what it is useful for us to know; the mode of creation—the how of things—could we comprehend it if revealed to us, does not in the least concern any real interest of mankind.

For all we know, the great Creator, the work of whose hands shows infinite variety, may have ex-

erted creative energy in a thousand ways. We cannot, it is true, understand how God could create all things in using a thousand modes; no more can we understand how he did it in using one. But it is as unreasonable to suppose that the Almighty was shut up to one mode of creation as to imagine he could only do some one thing and no other. The evolutionists, although in a most chaotic way, undertake to explain *how* we came to be; Moses, having more sense, does not.

As to the origin of man's body, Moses tells us all he knew—what the catechism and the chemists, the agnostics and common peasants tell us; as to its substance, it is "of the earth, earthy." This much we know as matter of fact, if there were neither Bible nor science. The words of Moses are few and in themselves most simple: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground [that is, his body], and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

If one should say of the creation of Eve that it describes the mode of her creation, it is obvious in reply that the writer tells us no more of the mode of the woman's creation out of "a rib" than of the man's out of the dust.

What God breathed into the man's body—and that only—gave him personality, and put between

him and beasts an infinite distance and difference. That which was the person had no kinship with the earth; did not come out of the ground; never returns to it and could not do it. Bodies are of the earth, and were made to return to it; souls are of God and immortal. When done with the flesh—used for a time in its work in this world—the “soul returns to God who gave it.”

In the brief statement Moses makes, two things are very plain: First, God, who made the universe, made man, to whom he gave dominion over it. Second, the Creator had peculiar interest in the creation of man, honoring him above all things he had made. Of man alone it is said: “Created man in his own image.”

There seems to linger in some minds a vague notion of the mode in which creative energy exerted itself—a notion borrowed from the works of man and not the Word of God; a notion—crude and coarse—that man’s body was wrought out of wet clay, as the potter shapes his vessels, or as the sculptor molds his models. This is a childish and silly notion, for which the great author of Genesis is in no wise responsible.

There are some coarse, grotesque, and most shocking mediæval pictures that give such a representation—anthropomorphic to the point of deep



disgust—of the creative process, built on the potter theory. It was on a level with the poor illiterate negro's theory: "The Lord made man out of the soft clay and stood him up against the fence for to dry." Although a disrespectful question broke his theory to pieces, it was as good as the others; for there is no theory about it whatsoever taught in the Word of God. All the rest are childish guesses—more or less barbarous.

These coarse pictures and views have the same origin as those representations of the devil that show us a combination of ape and demon, with horns, split hoofs, and forked tail. But they are as good as evolutionism, and with full as much proof. Such nonsense and inarticulate lunacies come of trying to comprehend things unrevealed, undiscoverable, and in their very nature inconceivable.

Why should we vex ourselves? The evolution hypothesis—by the conditions of the question unprovable, yet contradicting no statement of fact or doctrine in the Scriptures—is at last and at best only a pretty, ingenious, and amusing invention, prominently displayed—while the fashion is on—in intellectual toy shops, lacquered *bric-a-brac* to amuse idlers.

As to man this is indisputable; he is here and in

every respect as the Bible describes him. And the Bible is the only Book that does describe him; in his flesh and spirit, his strength and weakness, his mortality and immortality.

We are the people this Book describes in all our moods and stages of development—describes as no other book, or all books put together, ever described us.

We might well say, borrowing words from the woman who talked with Jesus by Jacob's well: "Come see a Book which tells me all things that ever I did; is not this the Book of God?" Man needs all that this Book says he needs, and finds in it all that he does need; they suit each other as the light and the eye, so that neither would mean anything without the other.

What can evolution have to do with this Book? How is one solitary fact or principle of Christianity in the least affected by evolution—proved or unproved, provable or unprovable?

These questions consider evolution only as an hypothesis—and not a good working hypothesis even—about the origin of the universe in general and the origin of man in particular. Respectable evolutionists are not fairly responsible for the many vagaries as to religion some of its disciples have connected with it.

If some who claim to be evolutionists only understood the facts set forth in Genesis and the truth about Christianity, they never would have concluded that in being evolutionists they must become infidels; any more than one dreaming he can invent perpetual motion in machinery finds it logical and necessary to quit saying his prayers. Nor would he logically quit praying if he should make his dreams a reality and invent a machine that would run till the crack of doom.

If some had only known that evolution does not contradict Moses, they would have never taken the plaything up; most dangerous toy it is on account of their shocking ignorance of the Bible and of the Christian religion.

If evolution be intended as "a shot" at the "Old Ship of Zion," she rides the storm unhurt; it has missed its aim and gone down into unfathomed depths where the "missing link" of the argument awaits its coming. When one comes to study Christianity and evolution in relation to it—whatever may be, or not be, its meaning in relation to anything else, evolution is like the "idols" to which Corinthians "offered meats" and of which St. Paul said, they were—"nothing in the world."

Yet evolution may do, as it has done, infinite harm. If weak-headed or bad men—seeking an

excuse to be delivered from conscience and from God—are silly enough to conclude that by believing in evolution they do away with God, then they will naturally live as they please, so far as neighbors may allow them. Then they will naturally “walk in their own lusts” so far as Satan tempts them and opportunity allows—that is, to be plain about it, such men and women will naturally go to the devil, as we see them doing every day; also, drag down with them children and, to the extent of their influence, Christian civilization and whatever in this world is good for man.

Paganism shows what men come to when they live as the beasts live—that is, live as they please.

The danger that is in the evolution hypothesis is not measured by the force of its argument, else it would be small; or by the significance of the notion itself, else it would be nothing: it is measured by the proneness of fallen humanity to sin—a proneness manifest to eyes that can see, whether the Bible had spoken or been silent on the subject. Even Roman Horace—a man not overreligious—saw clearly how natural it is for man to approve the right, yet pursue the wrong of things.

God is in the way of a bad man; he wishes there were no God; he hears of some new notion, or old one galvanized into movement; somebody says of

it: "If that is so, there is no God." The desperate sinner embraces the silly notion forthwith as something absolutely proved beyond the possibility of a doubt—taking it whole as an anaconda swallows a calf. He swears that he believes it; affirms that there is no God; and so, for a time, puts his conscience to sleep, as a big dose of morphine quiets nerves tortured with pain. Of the awakening he does not think; but he will. He lives as he lists; puts God out of his thoughts and tends, day by day, to reach lower levels. He becomes a beast of finer organization—using weapons instead of claws—and what he does will depend on his tastes and his environment. If the leaders in fine guessing and theorizing—the men the world honors and quickly forgets, the men set forward by the Philistine press and renegade preachers—make unbelief stylish and respectable, all the worse for those who have so little sense as to suppose that God may be disposed of by an unproved and unprovable hypothesis—"our enemies themselves being judges"—any more than by a silly resolution. And the worse for all mankind: when these notions (that degrade men to brute beasts walking on two legs and "secreting" more "thought" in the brain and yet as absolutely controlled in their choice and deeds, by external condi-

tions, as a miserable jellyfish) filter down through all the strata of life and at last saturate the mass of ignorance and ruffianism that is the terror of our time, then society reaps what the evolution schools have sown: anarchy and social chaos.

The old truths abide. God is God and man is his child. Man is a sinner—no matter how the body of him came into being—and needs salvation. Christianity meets all his needs, and Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world.

## CHAPTER XIV.

“TWICE TWO ARE FOUR.”

**F**OOLISH people have often declared that they would not accept what they could not understand. There is a sort of half truth in this more dangerous than a whole heresy. A sane man cannot believe what he does not at all apprehend, take hold of in any way—what means nothing to him. But he cannot live in this world without believing thousands of things he cannot comprehend.

“The just shall live by faith” is a Christian maxim; in a sense most important and true the unjust must also live by faith or not live at all. If we reject from our categories of things real and true all that we cannot fully account for in all respects, we will soon be left bankrupt of beliefs. Nothing will be left us but some principles in mathematics.

Is there any line of mental movement along which we will not find mysteries that defy analysis and defy our comprehension?

When one thoroughly masters the “rule of three” he understands it through and through. When he truly learns that “when two straight lines cross each other the adjacent angles are equal

to two right angles,” he should know all that is in the statement. One reason is, the proposition concerns fixed relations and there is not much in it. Outside such matters what is there in nature that does not baffle us with mysteries?

We name a certain invisible and—so far as we know, wherever matter is—omnipresent force, gravitation. That is the name we give the somewhat we think of; changing the name would not in the least change the thing—the force, essence, power, whatever it is—the invisible, all-prevalent, ever active, resistless somewhat to which we have, by consent, given a name.

It keeps *things* in their places; it has nothing to do with pure spirits. It holds our bodies and all material substances to the earth, just as it keeps great worlds true in their orbits. Its influence is so certain, and its relations to matter so calculable, that the experts can “fix the dates” for eclipses a thousand years—just as surely a million if they could live to make the calculations—before they occur, and fix them to the moment.

But what is gravitation? Sir Isaac Newton knew as little of its essence as any shepherd boy on Scottish hills who gazed wonderingly at “shooting stars.” Le Verrier and Adams, figuring in their studies that a very great planet “should be” in a



certain place in the far-distant heavens, knew as little of it as the cook who prepared their dinners. Yet the great planet, Neptune—ever so many times larger than our earth—was found when the telescope was turned to the region of space where the mathematicians said it ought to be. We give names to the hidden powers whose results we see, and imagine we understand what we have named.

Chemical or other cohesion holds things together, but what is cohesion?

We speak of the laws of crystallization, and not a human soul knows how rock candy is formed, any more than the secrets of diamonds and other precious stones, or the mystery of tiny snow crystals, formed in the upper air and, by mysterious gravitation, drawn down to cover the earth with their shining robe.

We speak of "capillary attraction." Such a phrase sounds as if it ought to explain something. It seems to do so to those who are content with words. How the oil travels up the wick, overcoming the law of gravitation—moving in open defiance of it; how this pad of good blotting paper (kindly laid on the desk by an amiable "life insurance agent" solicitous for the family), by just touching at its corner the big drop of ink, can draw it all up, only leaving a stain; of course people un-

derstand such things. “Why, it draws it by capillary attraction.” Yes—draws it; what draws it? Some folks think they understand the “circulation of the blood” because Harvey “discovered it!”

What consolation, comfort, soul-bracing grace there is in the ignorance of learning! It is almost reason for being a scholar. Words, describing things, do for definitions. Phrases, indicating only the conditions under which results occur, do service as explanation of the how of things. It is delicious to think we really know so much about so many things.

When we get out of inanimate things into the spheres of life—and they are many—only very ignorant people feel like they know anything. What joys have childhood and ignorance!

The more one learns the less he knows. The young college boy—nearly sophomore—has his head full of terms, very long words many of them, and to him they are the very fruit of the tree of knowledge; “canned goods” of accumulated ignorance rather—overuse meaning colic and dyspepsia. But the boy thinks he knows, and for the time is more than content. As a young preacher, when he can speak of the “objective and subjective” results of prayer, thinks he knows all about the soul’s confidences with its Father. How such

a young preacher knows so much passes all understanding of old ones—not egotists. There is nothing like congenital egotism to keep one young.

Before he was old enough to vote—missing the chance by two weeks in 1860—this writer undertook once (will the friends of that day who still “linger on these mortal shores” forgive him?) the “Problem of Evil”—the origin of sin in this great universe. The outrage was perpetrated on an innocent country congregation: Shiloh Church, Harris County, Georgia. It is a dreadful confession to make, and made with much confusion of face for the sake of some just beginning, who, however, must learn by experience. Deliverance came suddenly and wholly. Matt Biggers—“Judge” we called him—the biggest man every way in the congregation, was sleeping sweetly and snoring gently just as the young fool, who imagined he was preaching, reached the “ergo” of his discourse. The good man cured him on the spot for good and all. Honor to that wise sleeper!

At this late date the author begs forgiveness of the descendants of that unoffending congregation. The offense is condoned only by the fact that men counted chief “rabbis in Israel” had put certain “theodicies” and other explanations and explications into his hands and with much commendation.

He afterward found out that these good people counted the books profound because they themselves did not understand them.

What can the wisest make out of this cluster of weeds by the wayside? This poor mullein stalk (yet good for many uses) gripping the soil there with one real root and many little surface feelers—growing in a half-humble, half-sullen way; what do we know of its present mode of existence, more than of its origin? Close to it grow blackberry vines, crab grass, “rag weeds,” nettles, a bunch of violets, and not ten feet away a spray of eg-lantine on which a bright bird swings and sings. Such a grouping stopped the writer one summer day in Sheffield, Ala., close to the beautiful Tennessee River. The blue-eyed boy, Paul—companion in many jaunts and long journeys—pulled the violets “for mamma,” scared the bird away, and asked the names of some of the things he saw. Name to him was enough; the how of their growing there together—so different, yet each getting out of earth and air its own food and no other—baffled the older man—child three, father fifty-one—into confusion.

All over these wondrously fertile California plains—made rich as Egypt by receding seas ages before the Pharaohs came—are farmers with great

gang plows—eight horses to some of them—breaking, sowing, covering as they go; along the hillsides in middle Georgia the Southern negro, with little mule and “bull tongue” plow, “lays off his land” and sows his grain by hand; he “turns it under” and “brushes” the ground—if it don’t rain; these big farmers and that little one alike imagine that they understand the mysteries of sowing and reaping.

But the innermost secret of the germination of a wheat grain and all the processes that follow up to hot rolls is as far away from science as the origin of matter, or mind. We know that there must be earth, moisture, air, heat, time. Do we truly know anything else? Or do we know why either is necessary?

Out of this swelling, softening grain—so near to dying and rotting in this unknowable process—by and by emerges a tiny shoot, piercing its way through the dark, dead earth to air and sunshine; while a little white root screws its way into the soil and darkness for what things it needs and no other; root never going up or turning green, blade never going down or turning white—the two never misplacing themselves as men so often do. The root pushes deeper and farther around as the stalk grows, feeding it with whatever it needs out of the

ground and combining with what stem and leaves gather from the upper world of free air and light; all working together, the harvest, by and by, will show “ some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold,” more than we began with.

But what power in vegetable life did all this work of wonder right here before our eyes?

We know nothing of the how of this sowing and reaping. Solving such problem is as far from head scientists as from Australian Bushmen. The scientist knows more about the conditions of growth; he speaks of “ heredity,” “ environment,” “ struggle for existence,” “ natural selection,” “ survival of the fittest,” and other such shields for ignorance, “ naked ” and looking about for “ fig leaves.” The poor negro farmer knows as much, only he speaks of “ fixing the land,” “ good seed,” “ tending the crop,” and in other such speech indicates that there must be good land well prepared, good seasons, freedom from such wild growths as choke the grain. But neither Darwin nor the negro knows anything of the secrets locked up in life processes, going on before their eyes, yet unseen.

The difference is this: the man of learning very often takes words describing conditions and results as explaining processes; the plowboy does not

know enough to suspect there is a mystery. The one covers ignorance with many words; the other is naked in his ignorance, and like the first pair in the garden of Eden "is not ashamed."

Mysteries only multiply when we ask about the humblest conceivable animal life. Beginning with the poor sponge, half one and half the other, the plot thickens as we ascend to man—of which wondrous work of God Elizabeth Barrett Browning sings:

Since God collected and resumed in man  
The firmament, the strata, and the lights,  
Fish, fowl, and beast, and insect—all their  
Train of various life caught back upon his arm,  
Reorganized and constituted man,  
The microcosm, the summing up of works.

The "egg question" upsets and bewilders all understanding. As to the how of its forming and its hatching—young chick bearing the markings of two distinct, strangely resembling yet radically differing birds—all who so much as know there is a mystery here are confounded. Socrates knew no more about it than the hen that laid the egg he had for breakfast. Our head laboratory and "last analysis" man—call him "biologist," and it seems that he ought to know—is no wiser as to the how of this egg-forming and egg-hatching than the wise-looking goose hiding her nest among the

rushes, or the playful oriole—never puzzling about problems, but knowing how to make that wonderful nest of hers, swinging her cradle high overhead.

It is matter for sneering or laughter—according to one’s mood—this great ado of word fence, charge and counter charge, guess and other guess, as to how the first man got to be a man, when we are absolutely ignorant as to the how of our own existence, or of any other living thing.

Little granddaughter Ruth in her cradle there is herself a puzzle and mystery not surpassed in the first chapter of Genesis. The baby, owner of a tiny body of wondrous and complex organization—how did she come by the little form in which for a time she houses herself? Eyes like great-grandfather’s—call it “atavism” and it is plain to some—mouth like her Aunt Laura’s, missionary in China; hair like her father’s; nose like her mother’s; what can we say to explain all this?

And most wonderful, the person (likeness and unlikeness not yet discernible) inside that little body infinitely different from the flesh and blood it owns and directs; one and yet of two. As she dwells in that small castle of a body and through its soul windows—great blue eyes—looks love at the mother or fun at Ethel, the older baby—reach-



ing over the side of the cradle to kiss her little sister; the two of them kissing, cooing, and laughing till she who bore them in anguish is lifted into the seventh heaven of divine motherhood—the young father meantime glancing round and proud as Trajan on his day of triumph; the two old folks (knowing more and understanding less of these sacred mysteries of life and death, having many times walked in the valley of the shadow lying close by little graves) looked at each other across the fireplace and could not see clearly, for

A mist rose in their eyes,  
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green,  
Before the useful trouble of the rain.

What does scientist more than peasant know of the how of all this most complex mystery of parentage, childhood, likeness, unlikeness, flesh and blood, soul and spirit? Yet there are the babies, living facts to be believed in by all, but comprehended by none.

And why should the pretty baby—herself some day grown into all mysterious and sacred motherhood—ever care in the least as to the processes creative power used to bring her original ancestors out of nothing to be what they were; the first two *persons*, capable of thought, emotion, volition, love, joy, grief, fear, hope, ecstasy, sin, holiness, im-

mortality, and somehow, unknown to themselves, dwelling in bodies—not themselves, yet theirs—“wonderfully and fearfully made,” body and spirit both instinct with life so potent as to be transmissible through all the ages?

Puzzle her pretty head and vex her loving heart as she may, she will never know any more than the goose knows, or Herbert Spencer knows, or Moses tells.

Of all conceits there is none sillier than the notion of rejecting as untrue or unworthy of belief whatever we cannot understand. In point of fact no man so much as pretends to follow this notion except in objecting to the Bible. The inanest nonsense going out into the world from unbalanced brains is something like this: “Finding something both unknowable and inconceivable, I will leave off believing what I do or may know.” It is like the wisdom of one who might say: “As to twice two being four I am agnostic, for the reason that I cannot conceive what the number two might become if squared through an infinite series.”

A plain man, not a fool, would make short work of such silliness. He would answer: “No matter what you don’t know, I do know that *twice two are four.*”

Yet some, when they cannot conceive how God

made man, cannot so much as tell how they themselves got into their own bodies, or even stay in them; or how the nerve works when it tells the brain when the gout gives their legs another twist, pretend to try to explain how man got into being without being made at all! Unable to do either, and baffled in a search it was silly to make, they affirm agnosticism—pure and simple know-nothingism—concerning God and the soul and all other matters of chief concern to man. And want science to swear to their character! Stripped naked of fine words and airy pretense, agnosticism at bottom is only a big name for the vulgar silliness we have had in consideration: “I believe nothing that I do not understand.” There is only one folly greater: that of the Christian who throws overboard his religion because some other, who has never tried it, says he doesn’t understand it. Such silliness is never bottomed on facts; it is a child of sin and conceit.

Agnosticism, which is the proud ignorance of a sort of learning, no more disproves or even affects any truth of Christianity than a peasant’s ignorance of the processes of nature hinders their movement or proves that they do not go on.

Evolution, by acknowledgment of its chief men, lacks the links that make demonstration. But if

it were finally and fully proved, it no more makes valid argument against Christianity than the discovery of canals on the surface of Mars—all hands agreeing in agnosticism as to how they got there—would set up an argument, on business principles, against the construction of the Nicaragua Canal.

What a man needs is not a theory of the mode by which he got into being, but clear-shining truth that meets all the needs of his being and shows him how to live. No matter whence or how he came, man is here; he is a living soul, owner and manager of a hungry body that must have bread or die. Shall he defer eating till some wise one explains the mystery of the seed growing secretly or makes plain to him the philosophy of digestion; or cease eating altogether because some other, claiming to be wisest of men, declares himself to be agnostic as to all these things?

Evolution and the theories of one sort and another, standing in with it, do nothing for man. It does not propose to do anything for him; is not disposed to do anything for him; feels no obligation to do anything for him; solemnly and truthfully declares it can do nothing for him.

Yet man is here. He is hungry, wanting bread; thirsty, needing water; in the dark, afraid and cold—begging piteously for the light.

The agnostics and their allied tribes come empty-handed to his hunger; they bring broken pitchers—rather pitchers made without bottoms—to his thirst; they bring lamps that were never lighted and without oil—mere toys, antique or modern, pretty or ugly—to his chill darkness.

Had they proved all they guess about instead of proving nothing, man is still man. God is man's Father and Jesus Christ his divine Brother and Saviour. The Holy Ghost is still Enlightener, Sanctifier, and Comforter. Right is still right, and wrong is still wrong. Hell is still hell, and heaven is still heaven. Man is still a sinner, and the gospel is to-day, as of old, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE DEVIL'S THEORY OF VIRTUE.

**I**N the opening chapters of the book of Job Satan plays a conspicuous part. In conceiving the real meaning of these passages mere literalism will bring us into absurdities and contradictions without number.

The whole book is full of dramatic movement. It is more like a drama than any writing that has come down to us from ancient Hebrew times. Perhaps it is a drama. And why not?

Prophets appealed to the imagination in metaphor and allegory as the Master did in illustration and parable. No wise teacher, seeking to reach the reason, ignores the imagination. One reason the Bible holds the attention of mankind as no other book ever did, or does, is found in its vivid style: it is full of movement and life, of pictures fresh and real as nature itself, and of descriptions and delineation unmatched by any writers of books.

The value of truth is not so conditioned by the form in which it comes to us that it must come in

any fixed way to be the truth. The efficacy of inspired truth in making "free" the souls of men does not depend upon the mode of inspiration; least of all upon a theory of the mode of inspiration, but upon man's embracement of it; upon his making it his truth in his thoughts and plans of life; upon his personal living—his incarnation of it. So thought the Psalmist: "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Truth is one, but its forms of expression are as varied as the manifestations of life.

The truth which the book of Job brings to the enrichment of our thoughts and the betterment of our lives is worth as much to us, in every way, as if we knew it were all simple history, and it is all the better for coming to us in the shape it assumes. Just as the teachings of our Lord's parables are as binding upon our reason and conscience as any other doctrines he taught, and are the more easily made our own coming to us in the form he gave them.

The truth in this wonderful book is no more weakened by its dramatic form than it is invalidated by our confessed ignorance of its authorship. Nobody knows who wrote the book of Job, and well-informed people do not pretend to know. Most of the disputings and trials growing out of

notions of the authorship of certain books in the Bible is "much ado about nothing."

The book of Job is history: perhaps not of one man—almost certainly not of one man—but, what is far more important, of many. It is of perennial interest and value to all who know that a man is more than a beast. As to materialists and their thoughts—which they affirm to be mere "secretions of the brain"—no divine word or truth of any sort has reverence from them. They and their teachings are "of the earth, earthy;" they cling to the dirt, illustrating and in their measure fulfilling the ancient prophecy: "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." (Gen. iii. 14.) They put themselves in the sphere of brute beasts that come and go as the grass they eat comes and goes.

What is in the book of Job has been lived, all of it, thousands of times; perhaps never all of it by one man, yet lived by men. It is, or may be, universal history. It concerns all who think enough to know that life has in it more than eating and drinking; who know what sin is; who have suffered and fought, though in darkness, their doubts to death. What it records is going on every day and will go on to the end.

Knowing better than most all these things, Car-



lyle speaks for many—yea, for all who know something of the heights and depths of experience; the temptations and triumphs, the sins and sorrows, the heavens and the hells of human life; who know but a small part even, of the “secret things” of God and men: “A noble book; all men’s book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never ending problem of man’s destiny and God’s ways with man here in this earth. . . . Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation, oldest choral melody of the heart of mankind; so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars!”

Satan never did, does not now, never will talk to the Almighty—arguing at him and taunting him with saucy satire, as his equal in dignity and authority. To take these opening passages literally would be too monstrous for reverence—as repugnant to right feeling, rational conception, and truth as some passages in “The Paradise Lost”—passages, both in thought and setting, horribly unscriptural and essentially pagan.

However far the most ultra conservative of thinkers and expounders may press their views (some of them taking their conception of the arch-enemy from poetry, tradition, allegory, and folk-lore, or

even from mediæval paintings of a physical monster, breathing fire, with horned head, cloven feet, and forked tail; or great bat wings black as night—like “Apollyon” in “Pilgrim’s Progress”) of the personality, power, semi-almightiness, and boundless resources of the devil, his talking face to face, impudently, tauntingly, and defiantly to the Almighty Jehovah is simply unthinkable. The supposition of literalness in these descriptions does not help us to any rational or scriptural doctrine of Satan; it makes it impossible to have any truthful notion of him; it is utterly false as to the facts about him and monstrously irreverent as to God. Here, as in so many other passages, “the letter killeth;” it is the “Spirit that giveth life.”

It would possibly help our conceptions of the Bible doctrine concerning the devil to consider that we owe him neither reverence nor respect.

Such ideas as Satan stands for in these two introductory dialogues—prelude to what follows—he has been teaching from the beginning of time, and, with all men who would listen to him, with notable success. The theory of virtue he sets forth in these dialogues is one of the fundamentals of his creed; it is, in very large measure, his stock in trade—nearly all that he has. In this low-bred doctrine of all that seems good in mankind he has

always had a large and noisy following; never stronger than now, when men, called scientists, seek in matter the genesis, explanation, and ending of all life, seen and unseen.

Accepting the devil's theory concerning conscience and virtue—whether at first or second hand exposition—although it debases men to brute beasts and human life itself to mere animalism, men walk in it with unswerving consistency all their days and go out of life in the thick darkness of it.

In his bitter war upon mankind and the truth of God, Satan has found the doctrine he seeks to set up and demonstrate in these introductory passages in Job his most potent weapon. In order to show in a vivid way what a liar he is, the writer of the book of Job (wrote just as truly to us as if we knew his name and personal history—with steel engraving and preface and autobiographical sketch by his own hand—whether Job, Solomon, Moses, or some other unnamed sage and genius capable, under inspiration, of writing such a book) describes Satan as personally declaring his theory of human virtue to God himself.

One of the devil's cardinal points of doctrine—the heart of his crazy creed and the one thing he sincerely believes—is this: No man is good

and no man so much as pretends to be good without a selfish motive. He who, judging others by himself, said, "Every man has his price," was, at bottom, a scoundrel waiting for a bid, and a teacher in Satan's school.

How firmly and confidently Satan holds to his creed he shows to all men; his temptations are always addressed to selfishness. He has tried it on every man who has lived, from Eden down. He believed it would win what time he tempted the Son of God and of Man in the wilderness. To this day he is baffled and confounded by the sincerity of Jesus, as the Pharisees, his children after the spirit, were when he walked among men. Better than any other who ever meditated upon the words, we may suppose, Satan came to understand the full significance of that divinely triumphant saying of Jesus to his disciples the night before his passion: "The prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in me."

Selfishness as a predominant motive in all life Satan believes in with all his bitter and malignant soul. On this ground he would account for all things that men plan or do. By this theory he would explain all heroisms and martyrdoms. It is his one key to the conduct of men in all things—in war and in love, in business and in religion.

Being what he is, it is the only conception possible to him. Character has much to do with one's beliefs. Such a thinker as Satan must think wrongly of necessity. This is one of the fearful consequences of evil doing and evil character; the power of right thinking is impaired, often destroyed.

The heart of Satan's kingdom is selfishness. He knows nothing else, nor do his friends and followers. If all were like him in character, his doctrine would dominate the universe. No more than a man can the devil conceive of an emotion he never felt, a principle he never recognized, a truth he never knew.

If far back in the ages Satan, unfallen and good, had nobler and truer conceptions, evil so wrought in him that they had faded from his memory and dropped out of consciousness long before his test and trial with the man of Uz.

If God in Christ Jesus had not shown what love is as a motive in human life; if he had not crucified selfishness, and helped his disciples<sup>\*</sup> to crucify it even unto death, we may well suppose that by our time the devil's creed would have swept the world without dissent.

As some men—teaching their own conceits for religion and confounding their notions of it with

the thing itself—so Satan evolves his beliefs out of his experience; he had no higher inspiration. As if his experience, one-sided as it is, were commensurate with life, or the equivalent of truth. Creeds so evolved—thought no more than water rises above the level of its original spring—whether by Satan or men, are of necessity narrow, intolerant, chaotic.

The devil's audacity is altogether equal to mixing "with the sons<sup>\*</sup> of God." It is an ancient and confirmed habit with him; he began it in the Garden of Delights with the first human beings he ever saw. He is a regular church goer to-day, and will, when opportunity occurs, take a leading hand in running the affairs of the Church. Nothing pleases him more than inducing people to play at being religious, unless indeed he can persuade one company of disciples to persecute another company in the name of religion. Then his delight almost makes him forget that he is in hell.

Appearing "among the sons of God," he is challenged to consider the case of Job, of whom God says to the devil—so the drama gives us the thought: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"

Never yet did bad man or devil hear good words of another that it did not put their lying machinery in motion. Against Job's life Satan could say nothing, and he attacked his motives. His answer gives his entire theory of all that is called good or that seems to be virtuous: "Doth Job serve God for naught?"

To him, as to his followers, the question carried its own answer and settled off-hand all debate concerning virtue. He was perfectly sincere, for he was willing to test his doctrine with entire confidence in the result. If his thinking could have gotten out of his own experience, he would have known better. His doctrine had been tested before Job's time; but as to truth he was never well informed, being a narrow and forgetful person, as to high-souled men and lofty principles of action always ignorant. Satan was so sure of his theory that he challenged the test: "Doth Job serve God for naught? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

He knew well what he would do in such a case, and judging others by himself, as his followers do,

he was entirely confident in his statement. He was sure that Job's faith would fail and his virtue die under the stroke of affliction; poverty and bereavement would, he believed, make an end of piety and trust.

It is impossible for the devil, as it is difficult (maybe impossible) for wicked and insincere men, to believe in the sincerity of any man who seems to be good. Hence there was never yet a good man unslandered. Being what he is, Satan can no more have faith in man than in God; no more can a mean and selfish man. The hypocrites of our Lord's time could not deny his miracles, but they could not understand his motive; he did nothing to promote his own interests.

Jesus was a poor and ill-kept man, without the comforts of life, wearing such clothes and eating such food as were common to peasants and to fishermen. He had power, but did not grow rich, nor so much as improve his condition. He was a puzzle to unbelief. Absolute sincerity always confounds the devil and his company. So the hypocrites and Pharisees, compelled to admit the reality of the miracles he wrought, yet incapable of conceiving of any unselfishness, denied his sincerity and charged him with working in the name of religion for Satan's kingdom!



Satan's astonishment was profound when Job emerged triumphant from the storm that had played upon him and the thick darkness that compassed him about. He had been rich and great, a prince among men; he was a pauper now—a fault the world does not forgive in those who have been rich. He had been the loved and trusted sheik of a strong and loyal tribe; now there was not a servant to give him a cup of water. He had been the father of a large and happy family; now every son and daughter lay dead—hurried out of the world without readiness or warning.

Sharper contrasts never entered into human experience. In the midst of his misery and torment from conceited people, who called themselves his "friends," Job himself drew a picture unmatched; the two chapters, twenty-ninth and thirtieth, unequaled by mortal pen.

Was ever such a picture so charming and noble, of a great and prosperous and good gentleman, drawn in words? "Moreover Job continued his parable, and said: O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet

with me, when my children were about me; when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; when I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street! The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained from talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand."

If good men governed, such a prince and leader and helper of the needy would never die. No hurt would come to his house. Man's idea of Providence is of a power that secures to its favorites boundless

and unbroken prosperity; without reverses, without pain, without sorrow, and he would have no death. But God's way is not man's way, and God's way is right: it is "good, acceptable, perfect."

Job draws the second picture in colors so dark that we can see and feel the murky, cheerless night settling about him: "But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.

. . . And now am I their song, yea, I am their by-word. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. Because he hath loosed my cord, and hath afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me. Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction.

. . . Terrors are turned loose upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud. . . . My bones are pierced in me in the night season; and my sinews take no rest. By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. . . . My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep."

Most bewildering and horrible of all, it seemed to Job that God would not hear him: "I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not." And at such a time as this poor Job found no help in his wife, the mother of his children. Disaster and darkness, death and desolation—the horror and tragedy of it all had upset her; she was ready to die of trouble, and she—seemingly joining forces with Satan—told the miserable Job to "curse God and die." It was only what other women have felt when all seas broke upon them and all winds howled about them: "O I wish I were dead!" God—the eternal and infinite Father—knows how to be compassionate.

With what confidence Satan had watched the great victim of his bitter wiles, as messenger after messenger told of disaster and death!

With the ending of every story of trouble and loss the devil expected that Job would illustrate his doctrine by cursing to his face the God he had worshiped. The stricken man—as when one is stunned and dazed by a blow unexpected and out of the darkness—was silent at first. And the human heart will understand this. The writer knows an old preacher who said: "The first religious ecstasy that came to me came when our first baby ceased to breathe."

When the last messenger finished his tale of woe Job gathered up his strength and cried out in glorious triumph: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"

When Satan heard from the lips of the broken man this shout of triumph he was, for a time, stunned into silence of bewildering amazement. From that scene—Thermopylæ in very truth, battle of the "hot gates" it was—he withdrew, perplexed but not convinced. A million Jobs so tried and so triumphing over him would not have convinced him that there can be any unselfish virtue. It was not evidence Satan lacked, but capacity; he could not conceive of unselfishness.

Selfishness is the one thing Satan can believe in; men, schooled by him, come to the same incapacity of belief in true goodness. He could not surrender that belief; it was all he had; that gone, he and his whole kingdom were utterly bankrupt. He is bankrupt, though not knowing it; for his creed is a lie. Satan believes himself rich because he believes his creed.

And Job's was a marvelous triumph. No wonder it silenced, for a time, the ingenious and ready loquacity of the devil himself, and men like unto him.

Not a few good people so crushed and bereaved,

have failed utterly; have turned from God to trust him no more; some going into the night of lunacy, some dying outright when the blow struck home. These the infinite Father will judge compassionately: "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

In tempting good men who suffer, Satan's advantage is often found in the false notions they have indulged as to the real design and meaning of the providence of God in dealing with his children. If they begin by believing that he promises worldly prosperity and personal comforts to his children, what can they do when the storm bursts upon them but fall into unbelief? For them the very foundations are destroyed. God did promise to his people Israel blessings in storehouse and barn—riches, peace, long life, and whatever in this world good men could wish; but he does not guarantee to any person the blessings of prosperity. It would have made pure religion impossible if God had offered a temporal reward for fidelity. Such a view of Providence is but counterpart to Satan's philosophy that man does nothing except as self-interest inspires him.

But Jesus begins by saying: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and follow me." He meets the devil's creed with a demand

for the crucifixion unto death of all selfishness. He and he only who substitutes for his own the will of God incarnates the doctrine of self-denial. Peddlers in small moralities say self-denial is the dropping of this little thing and that little thing. Preposterous! It is the substitution of our will by the will of Jesus Christ. Then spiritual life drops all that is not good.

The man who meets our Lord's demand leaves little vantage ground for his enemy. God cares nothing about wealth or poverty except as he may overrule these conditions to make men good. The richest man in the world amounts to nothing in God's view of him unless he is a good man, and it is his goodness and not his gold that makes the measure of him.

Job shows what faith can do; not what sincere and truly religious people always do. It was a sublime self-conquest, inconceivable by any philosophy of man; only possible to faith in God. It has not over often been matched in this world; but it has been matched, and is now, day by day, being matched. It is easier now since Christ Jesus, the divine Brother of the race, who sounded the depths of sorrow and agony whole seas deeper than the sufferings of Job, has shown us the way.

When a man ruined in fortune, stripped to beg-

gary, and every child dead in the house, rises to Job's great height and can cry out of a full and victorious faith, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" he is, then at least, about as good as a man can be in this world—maybe in any other. It reminds us of One who under the olive trees of Gethsemane, prone on the grass, in the bloody sweat of mortal agony, cried to God: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

When one feels as Job felt he need not trouble himself about any theory of religion whatsoever. Such a man knows "the secrets of the Most High and abides under the shadow of the Almighty." At such a time metaphysics should hold her peace. And such a man will not dissect his emotions or multiply words about things he saw or heard when he "was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful [possible] for a man to utter."

Satan's doctrine of virtue came to grief on the first test, and left him for a time confused and abashed. But he was ever inventive with quick turns and new combinations of old devices; yet never having foresight enough to plan a long and intricate campaign. It must be so; no lie can



adjust itself to a complicated series of events and conditions.

Satan did not in the least give up his theory of human goodness when he witnessed with astonishment Job's triumph of faith. He considered the matter and held to his doctrine with readjustment in the statement of it. He thought of the differences in men; some break down sooner, some later. Loss of property breaks the faith of some; children, others. Satan reasoned: "Some men are so essentially selfish"—he must work on this line or "go out of business"—"that a house in ruins, property swept away, and the sight of seven dead sons and daughters, leaves them unmoved; too selfish to be unhappy about anything except their own flesh."

He demanded another trial: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." And the devil believed this as selfish and insincere men believe it.

He was baffled again. He looked at Job on the ash bank, scraping his scabs with pieces of broken pottery. He was a horror to himself, and to his acquaintances a most loathsome sight; he was in the dust of abject humiliation. And suffer-

ing agony; every nerve quivering with pain, and every drop of blood on fire with the poison in it, Job was all but dead and at the point where the good and just God did not blame him for longing to die.

Yet "in all this did not Job sin with his lips." He was too low down for ecstasy, but not for submission. Only a few people will understand this, but the few will understand it through and through. Sometimes silence is the expression of faith's supremest triumphs. "As a lamb before his shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth."

We are not to conclude from this dramatic representation of Satan's relations to Job's afflictions that God ever turns over one of his dear children—that is, any human being—to the power, caprice, and hatred of the devil. A god like Vishnu or Moloch—that is, like the devil himself—might do this; but "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," never.

Let one try, if he can, to imagine Jesus as turning over one of his friends to the devil to experiment upon according to his will. We cannot think at all if we put Jesus in such an attitude; the mind stands still. Sooner think of tender mothers putting their little babes to nurse in wolf dens. What Jesus would not, could not do, the eternal

Father will not, cannot do, and never did; they are one.

But the desert men ascribed not only evil, but all that men call evil—sickness, poverty, bodily death, to Satan—"prince of the power of darkness" and, in the judgment of barbarians, almost omnipotent. Some with God's word before their eyes have the same notion of him. We should teach our children better.

The description of what he did to Job belongs to the dramatic movement that runs through the book. But we know, no matter what desert men believed—no matter what Greek fatalists taught, nor what any others, philosophers or theologians, have falsely believed—since Jesus has "shown us the Father" and "told us the truth" about God, that Satan is not the disposer of human events. What Jesus said at the table the night of Gethsemane stands true forever: "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." Between these kingdoms are no dealings except war; and God and his Son fight for man. No man is Satan's till he consents to be; a baby is not born into the devil's kingdom, but into God's. Else it would never be born at all. Out of the gracious influences of God's kingdom no child is ever wrenched by power outside of himself. But he may

“go away” as went the prodigal—following, of choice, the evil and not the good. For every baby born we know that the almighty Father does what can be done. It is true that many children are brought up under influences the most adverse conceivable to righteousness; them will God judge justly and mercifully.

The Faust and other dramas, legends, poems, traditions, as do the Scriptures, show us how a soul may sell itself to the devil and then belong to him. But God never yielded a human being to Satan, even as a loan.

Satan's second failure with Job utterly upset and silenced him. But he was still unconvinced. A fiercer trial awaited the long-suffering and heroic soul. He sought reënforcements and brought men of as false beliefs to help him.

Bumptious and sanctimonious “friends” so called came to him. They said they had “come to mourn with him and comfort him!”

Few were their tears, without end their words. When they had badgered him for days, Job pronounced upon their spirit: “Miserable comforters are ye all.” His wail of agony, “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends!” did not move their flinty hearts.

Seven days, to the poor man's torture, they sat

about in silence, gazing at him. When they did speak there was nothing of friendly sympathy and brotherly compassion. They came at Job with a theory of sin and suffering as full of lies as Satan's theory of virtue and selfishness.

Their doctrine, not yet driven out of the Christian Church, was this: "There is no suffering without sin; therefore the seeming goodness of Job was hypocrisy." A doctrine in its very essence pagan and cruel to the afflicted as death. The barbarians of Malta, A.D. 63, reasoned after this fashion when they saw the viper fasten on the hand of St. Paul: "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."

The doctrine these hateful legalists tried to beat into poor Job's mind is without sense or scripture. The Bible tells us that it "behooved the Captain of our salvation to be made perfect through suffering." Yet some say: "No suffering and no bodily death without sin!"

Paul tells us how our "light afflictions [light in comparison with the blessings awaiting the faithful; yet they were in bonds and scourgings, in stonings and cruel persecutions and death] will work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Job's Arab tormentors taught

that all suffering proves sin. And to this day some agree with them; even after God's rebuke of them and what Jesus Christ has taught us.

Those who turn away from the word of Christ for their theology are always getting lost or mired in metaphysical jungles and swamps. So the disciples, looking at a poor man "blind from his birth," assumed that suffering is proof of sin: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus denied both assumptions, and referred the question to the great plans of an all-embracing Providence, infinite in wisdom, power, and love.

Day after day these cruel men—glib of tongue they were and "ready with old saws and modern instances"—argued, sneered, threatened, bullied, lied, judged and misjudged, the poor sufferer in the meanest, most loveless and relentless spirit ever yet manifesting itself in words—except by modern imitators. They condemned without evidence, their theory being to them all-sufficient in the face of all the facts of a long and noble life. Character goes for nothing when it gets in the way of conceited theorizers.

They badgered and tormented Job with their vain, ignorant, and bitter dogmatism as if he had been a vicious beast. With merciless and devil-

ish ingenuity of sophistry and self-righteousness they laid out all their force—four against one—to coerce the broken and wretched sufferer into acceptance of their theory of him. They would rather have killed him than to have lost the debate; they would have been happy to have seen him stretched dead on his ash bank, had his last breath been confession to them that they were right.

Satan was in them—as in men like them—trying to do, by their help, what alone he had failed to do. And he had better success. Pharisaic and hypocritical men—having theories to set up—joined forces with him; in the name of truth preaching lies and in the name of virtue outraging righteousness and brotherhood. They made Job desperate and well-nigh crazy; till he could have torn them in pieces in very desperation of mental torture; till he said some wild and irreverent things. The refinement of torture is best understood by those who, like the “comforters of Job,” sit in judgment upon others and are uncharitable in proportion to the loudness of their professions of goodness.

When God had taken his suffering son in hand, and had brought him into the sunlight of heavenly truth, we are not surprised that the tormentors were glad to have the prayers of the man they had

well-nigh destroyed. Bad as they were, they were not as far gone as some of their kind; for they were still morally capable of heeding the rebukes of Jehovah.

If the devil had not been so ignorant, even he would have known better. Like his followers in all times, he was ever unlearned in the history of faith and sacrifice. Not to this day do he and his understand the heroes, martyrs, and confessors. Such lives they explain away on the ground of pretense, lunacy, or fanaticism. So did they in our Lord's time; so do they now. He who suspects the sincerity of all others is a villain at heart; he who sneers at heroism is base of spirit.

The Jerusalem Pharisees—saturated with selfishness themselves and so dominated by the motives that selfishness inspires that hypocrisy had become a second nature with them—found themselves for once stumped by the problem Jesus presented to them. Totally incapable of understanding unselfishness in any man, they were confounded by the miracle worker who never exerted his power to better his humble condition, or to advance his apparently humbler fortunes. It is one of the withering curses of sin that such men cannot get outside themselves in judging others. The miracles they could not deny; unselfish love



of men they could not in the least comprehend; snow-white sincerity of soul they could not even apprehend; they said: "He hath a devil."

The kindred of Jesus, rejecting the theory of his enemies that he "had a devil"—not in justice to him, but in selfish pride that sought explanation of the puzzle of his life in something less dishonoring to them—set up the theory of lunacy, and they said: "He is beside himself."

It is one of the fruits of sin—also no small part of its punishment—that men as surely as the devil lose the power to believe in goodness: in good men or a good God.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### “MEATS AND HERBS.”

TO get at St. Paul's entire and comprehensive view concerning “stumbling-blocks”—that is, things that occasion sin—it is not enough to quote only what he said about “meats offered to idols:” “If eating meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more meat while the world standeth; lest I make my brother to offend.”

He was not thinking of what offends a man, but of what leads the man “to offend;” two vastly different results from eating meats, drinking coffee, or doing hundreds of things in themselves indifferent and that being so “used” as not to be “abused” are neither good nor evil.

This saying of the broad-minded, independent, yet tolerant apostle has for generations been launched with inquisitorial temper and triumphant air at the heads of honest and godly men, as if it meant only this: “*What I don't approve it is a sin for you to do.*”

And this is precisely the interpretation the fanatical specialists—“debasing the moral currency,” as George Eliot phrases it—in the moralities do

put on St. Paul's words. As to sinning, Paul had his mind as much on the man, quoting the text to back up his special and personal demands on other people's consciences, as upon the careless meat eater who might do his weak brother hurt. His ignorance, narrowness, and consequent weakness made the apostle anxious about him.

St. Paul's noble text has been mistreated through the generations; it has been made a hobby for all narrow-minded meddlers with other people's consciences to ride to and fro rough-shod over so many as would lie down and let them. It has been pressed into the service of every imaginable silliness. It was flung at this writer—"junior preacher" on the Oxford Circuit, Ga., autumn of 1859—the offense being wearing beard.

About that time people of sense were getting out of the dense ignorance that counted it a "*sin* not to shave," the doctrine (they made it almost cardinal) probably originating in the custom of John Wesley's time and not in the practice of all men in the time of Christ and his apostles. It would be interesting to inquire why the anti-beard disciples left off doing up their hair according to the Wesleyan mode, which, with a man of the great reformer's sense, was simple conformity to the customs of the circle he moved in; dressing his hair

and robing his person as all gentlemen were accustomed to do in his time.

With equal irrelevance it may be (for the Levitical law on such matters had been dead nearly two thousand years) the young preacher retorted: “ It is unscriptural and against law to shave. Moses says to the priests: ‘ Thou shalt not mar the corners of thy beard.’ ” It so stunned and puzzled the good man that the young preacher repented having made the quotation. It “ offended ” the man—it did not cause him to sin.

The apostle’s text has not only been ridden as a hobby by booted and spurred ignorance and intolerance, it has been used as a repeating rifle—swivel gun rather, turning every whither—shooting at everything (accurate never), at men who smoke cigars, or cob pipe, wear clothes like other people’s; at women who put a love token on the finger, a pretty flower on the bonnet, and many other little concernments of men and women who believe that St. Paul truly meant something when he said: “ Let every man be persuaded in his own mind.” The meddling specialist thinks he means: “ Be persuaded in *my* mind.”

This intermeddling disposition may be a temperament with some; with others it is a vice, their meddling being done in the name of religion.

It is well enough to offer some further illustrations of an historical sort, the instances being vouched for. For the intolerant spirit we have always with us; its temper never changes; it only swaps hobbies from time to time. The illustrations will help some to be grateful that the long eclipse of personal liberty—albeit our times show not a few reactionary efforts toward ancient intolerance—is passing away, to return no more in its old time darkness and power to make afraid.

The late Dr. Lovick Pierce, of honored and blessed memory (“born,” as he said, “of good human stock,” in Halifax County, N. C., March 24, 1785, and going to heaven from the house of his son, Bishop George F. Pierce, Sparta, Ga., November 9, 1879), who was a preacher of a great, broad, sin-destroying, soul-saving gospel for seventy-five years, had many battles for soul liberty. It was this writer’s rare good fortune to be Dr. Pierce’s assistant in city mission work in Columbus, Ga., in 1860, and he now records, what he has said a thousand times, gratitude for that year’s association, continued in mutual love till he buried the grand old prophet in the city where he first knew him.

One instance may serve. Along in the thirties he was “complained of” because he “put on

suspenders.” He added to his story of the complaint this vindication of his “ departure ” from a custom that many supposed to be grounded in the moral law and emphasized by Sinaitic thunder: “ It was a great relief to me when suspenders came about; for I was always as round as a tree, and to keep my breeches on I had to draw them so tight that they hurt me.” On the same level of ignorance as the complaint about suspenders was the “ vote ” cast by the same man against giving George F. Pierce “ license to preach ” because his hair was “ combed back from his forehead ” — “ roached back ” as the inquisitor put it.

The censor of the noble preacher was a good man doubtless, yet a sort of lunatic in his conceit of superlative wisdom and godliness; in intellect narrow as a knife blade, in feeling mistaken for conscience, fitted to burn witches when Cotton Mather lorded it over God’s heritage, or to have served as “ inquisitor general ” in Alva’s army what time the Spanish butcher was ravaging the Netherlands; the brave people fighting a mighty battle for all the world and for all time, that men might “ worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences,” and not somebody else’s decree.

This complainer and “ accuser of the brethren ”

thought such a man as Lovick Pierce “worldly minded” because he wore “gallusses!” As if it were a case of “meats offered to idols” in Corinth A.D. 60!

For the good preacher’s critic—side tracking the gospel to give right of way to his notions about “galluses” and hair combing—Paul wrote in vain. He never consulted a man like Paul; went rather by his own head, or what he thought was his head, or, perhaps, what he thought was the head of some dead man, never inspired nor claiming to be inspired.

Methodism grew by inherent force in spite of such men, not by help of them. “Stumbling-blocks” their hobbies were; in the way of men and women of sense, keeping many of the “very elect” from joining a company they would have found good for themselves and a Church they would have blessed. Men of zeal and heroic self-sacrifice they were; but no zeal redeems the viciousness of an intolerance that despises and overrides the sacred rights of personal liberty of conscience.

The records of a Quarterly Conference (extracts sent to the writer) somewhere in the forties, as is now remembered (place, date, names, and all can be given by reference to bound copies of the *Wesleyan Christian Advocate* in the library of

Emory College, Oxford, Ga.), tell of a Church trial of that day. A brother was arraigned for “conformity to the world.” Specification: “Turning the dinner plates down on the table!” The old fellow’s wife had found out that turning the plates down beat the flies and kept the dust out; possibly had heard that it was “the style” in Charleston. They tried the husband for the sin of “conformity to the world”—as if imperial-minded Paul in his exhortation to the Roman Church, “Be not conformed to this world,” had his thought caught on the barbed hooks of any insignificances whatsoever.

How the lightnings of God’s truth played about the heads of intolerant and most irreligious Pharisees that day they worried our Lord’s humble disciples about unnecessary hand washings! Great ado these hypocrites—playing at being religious—made, as if for religion’s sake, over “the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.”

Some of our time, it may be supposed, do not read Mark vii. 1-23. The text for that sermon of His, blazing and flashing forth upon the “hypocrites” (His word for them), was from Isaiah: “Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”



What would these men—bothering their brethren about beard, “galluses,” onions, Limberger cheese, cigars, pickles, coffee, turning down plates, and such like matters of purely personal concern (as to things indifferent in the nature of things left by the great God to personal judgment, taste, and conscience, statute law, whether civil or ecclesiastic, is a folly, an usurpation, an impertinence, and a sin)—do to keep life in their bodies were they to see John Wesley, in his palmy days, dressed like an English gentleman and priest, walking down the aisle Sunday morning; his hair neatly done up in a cue, with knee breeches—pretty or ugly according to the shape of the legs inside of them—his shoes fastened with a glistening contraption of silver shoe buckles! Some would put *his* old breeches, shreds of the curtains round the bed his body died on, or shoe buckles in their most sacred oratorios as “aids to devotion,” or keep them under glass (as they keep George Washington’s old breeches in Liberty Hall, Philadelphia) for the reverent gaze of young theologues as inspiration to zeal! This does not honor honest John Wesley; it dishonors him; it is not Methodism; it is an offense to the Lord of glory. Nothing could be farther from John Wesley’s thought than reverence for his old clothes or the taking his words as in-

spiration. For such folly he, of all men, is blameless. He was a grown man.

This writer's grandfathers—one an itinerant of Asbury's time, the other a sturdy Baptist farmer—managed to keep their brogans on with buckskin thongs. Would that he had a set of them to-day—not as aids to piety (“ St. Anne's Wrist Bone ” would do as well for that), nor yet to use (he prefers “ Congress gaiters ”), but to hang up over the desk, reminders of fair-minded men—with good digestion—who never piddled in small casuistries, who minded their own business, loved God and their fellow-men, did not hoard money nor worship any “ golden calf ” whatsoever; feared the Lord Almighty and no other.

The cases Paul discusses in Romans xiv. and 1 Corinthians viii. are not the same cases. As to the Roman case, Paul does not say he would never eat any more meat. He had too much sense.

The first was a dispute about food among diet cranks; the second among brethren, with confused and amorphous ideas, about meats offered to idols. One drew the line at all flesh, classing men with graminivorous beasts; the second at flesh offered in idol worship. The notions under review in the Epistle to the Romans were senseless whims; in the Epistle to the Corinthians, although

without any basis in truth, yet, through the imagination and "weakness in the head," convictions. Both alike were peddlers of their own conceits, "troublers of Israel," and moral nuisances. The first were the more intolerant, having the least sense; the second more superstitious, having the least knowledge.

In his letter to the Romans the apostle dwells much on the duty of toleration, the right of personal liberty, and the arrogance—that quickly becomes a heinous sin, tormenting all but the sinner—of judging other people by what we call our conscience.

The trouble in Rome—doubtless the matter had been brought to Paul's attention, "terrifying him with letters"—was this: the flesh-eating brethren thought the herb eaters very foolish, as indeed they were; the herbists thought the meat-eaters very wicked, as in fact they were not.

Paul himself had small opinion of the vegetarians: "One believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs." The apostle does not enjoin upon the Romans the giving up of beefsteak, mutton chop, broiled ham, fish or fowl, on account of herb cranks. He did, however, give some of the most important and wise advice sensible men ever received. First, reason-

able, healthy, and Christian men must “ receive ” their “ weak,” herb-eating brethren, but not “ to doubtful disputations.” Fraternize with them, be patient with and good to them, but never argue with them. If for no other reason, this: they *do not know geometry*. For if such people had enough logical thought in them to be convinced by sound sense of a cherished error, they would have had too much to have swallowed the absurd theories which dominated them and which they were filled with longing to thrust down other people’s throats; defying common sense, the structure of human teeth and stomachs; also repudiating their own immemorial law (Genesis ix. 3) and all the “ revised statutes ” (Deuteronomy xiv. 1–20, etc.) and standing fast in “ the tradition of the elders,” by which their fathers had “ made void the law ” and their own petted notions—wholesome for none and sure of only one result: the torment of sensible people who did not readily submit to their whimsical and selfish dictations.

Second, Paul tells us plainly to mind our own business and to flee as from Satan himself the sin of assuming the divine prerogative of judging men.

The eaters and noneaters are strictly forbidden to “ despise ” one another; “ for God hath received him.” The herb eater and the flesh eater

alike saved forever, believing with all the heart in the Lord Jesus Christ; not for the sake of their notions about "meats and herbs" or other insignificant matters of purely personal concern, but for the sake of Him, "the Son of God and the Son of man," who "loved them and gave himself" for them.

As millions of sincere souls are saved through the infinite mercy and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, with all sorts of notions—called doctrines—and dogmatisms of their own concerning Him, and the how of salvation, with all sorts of much fondled conceits of their own, or with no theories at all; saved forever for the Redeemer's sake.

St. Paul, in both passages, teaches us that it is sinful to persist in unnecessary things when, by so doing, we may destroy souls for whom Christ died. But it is a fatal error to understand this clear-eyed, great-souled teacher of religion to mean that Christian men are to be pulled to and fro and pulled to pieces, in the vain effort to satisfy the whims and quirks of such as consecrate their energies to the regulation of their neighbors. They cannot be satisfied, nor placated; when men go to making doctrines they make them like themselves, variant and conflicting.

Paul had learned of Jesus Christ that his old

Pharisaic canons of criticism were man-made all of them; that they were ruinously false, and that through them the elders and scribes and priests had “made void the law of God;” he had also learned from the Divine Teacher that his old Pharisaic spirit and temper in judging other men was not only intolerant, but exceedingly wicked. Paul, who was as bold as any thinker who ever sought the truth only, believed that the Son of God meant something worth remembering when he said in the sermon on the mount: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

St. Paul’s doctrine of “stumbling-blocks” covers the cases of both parties in both Churches. A man seized with an idea of his own about morals—spinning it out of his head as Herbert Spencer spun “Data of Ethics,” and not learning it from Jesus Christ, or any inspired teacher of rights and wrongs, may, by urging his “convictions”—euphemism for notions—upon other people’s consciences, lay in their path a “stumbling-block” more dangerous to scriptural faith and honest-hearted unpharisaic religion than the whole drove of hogs drowned in the sea at Gadara. An unscriptural home-made conceit about rights and wrongs; a “fixed idea” that an “idol is something”—Paul and common sense to the contrary—may cause men to “offend”

—to sin—as surely as any practice whatever about “eating meats offered to idols.”

The fearful words of Isaiah have never been recalled: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.” He who calls a sin what God has not called a sin, who names as a virtue what God has not called a virtue, is a teacher of heresy—heresy rank and dangerous; heresy destructive at the last of true reverence for the Word of God; heresy that sets up a man’s conceit as of divine authority.

In his useful book, “The Study of Words,” Bishop Trench says: “So conscious have men been of this tendency of theirs to throw the mantle of an honorable word over a dishonorable thing, or, *vice versa*, of the temptation to degrade an honorable thing, when they do not love it, by a dishonorable appellation, that the Greek language has a word significative of this very attempt, and its great moral teachers frequently occupy themselves in detecting this most frequent, yet perhaps practically most mischievous, among all the impostures of words—*ὑποκορίζεσθαι*, itself a word with an interesting history. And when Thucydides (III., 82) would paint the fearful moral deterioration of Greece in the progress of its great civil war, he adduces this alteration of the received value of words, this fitting of false names to everything—names of honor to the

base, and of baseness to the honorable—as one of its most striking signs, even as it again set forward the evil, of which it had been first the result.”

Christ’s free children are not called on to banish wholesome “meats” from their tables, nor to change their course of living upon every fitful and impudent demand of hairsplitters in small moralities of their own manufacture. Such people bear about the same relation to Bible truth that the men who “utter counterfeit” money bear to the “coin of the realm.”

Some people are silly and some are lunatics in the name of religion; good people, who are neither, must endure their ways with invincible charity, but they need not trouble themselves about their notions. If it be possible, it is a kindness to try to enlighten them when it is not too late, as it generally is. So doing, we help to emancipate them from slavery to their own conceits.

What a man’s conscience is worth is not determined by sincerity alone; a good and safe conscience commands or forbids in the light of the truth. The sphere of conscience cannot be wider than a man’s knowledge of God’s truth concerning rights and wrongs.

A man who does not know the truth has a conscience unsafe as a compass not true; he mistakes



strong feeling for conviction; what he calls his conscience will drive him to wreck upon the rocks. Such a man confounds his prejudices and prepossessions with divine impressions, and will stab his neighbor with cruel misjudgments of conduct and motive and talk piously of "having the mind of the Spirit!"

A man who is personally as good as he is hopelessly ignorant raised doubts about the final salvation of two of the saintliest men ever given to the Church in America—devoted itinerant preachers all their lives, who "spent all their substance" of intellect, genius, grace, and health for the good of men—both dying poor with opportunities to be rich—because they were accustomed to smoke tobacco! It is charitable to believe that this man was conscientious; it is certain that he had invented tests of "acceptance with God" that Jesus Christ never gave. Such men should claim for themselves inspiration and bring forward their credentials. Their assumptions are a sort of blasphemy.

The substance of what St. Paul says to the Churches in Rome and Corinth about "meats and herbs," "holy days and new moons," and all things left to the judgment of men, may be summed up thus: 1. Charity all round. 2. The sin of

judging one another. 3. The sacred, blood-bought right of personal liberty to be maintained with invincible patience and dauntless courage. 4. The *heresy* of denying personal liberty, in things not condemned by the Word of God, to our brethren who do not think as we do.

On the right of personal liberty of conscience and the duty of maintaining it—at whatever cost—the apostle lays himself out with all his power of statement, exhortation, protest, and command in divers places. Paul, interpreting aright the doctrine of Jesus, lays the foundations of all our modern religious liberty—most precious of gifts from God! and if any mortal deserves a monument that pierces the clouds it is the tent maker and preacher who gave his all to preaching the gospel to the Gentile world.

To the Colossians he says: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”

One may be so carried away with his own notions as to suspect of heresy one who so much as quotes a passage like this just taken from the Colossians! The “therefore” in this charter of freedom has the strength of a nine-inch cable, holding

the ship to its anchorage against winds and waves. The argument of Paul begins with verse 1 chapter ii. in the Epistle to the Colossians, and terminates with this sublime climax as to the work of Jesus Christ in redeeming the human race: "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Then he says: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink." We owe it to Him who conquered for us the empire of darkness to maintain, though with the patience of love, yet with deathless tenacity, our personal liberty of conscience and of religious observance.

Paul went just as far as truth would allow him in dealing with the scruples of the Corinthian brethren, but he did not surrender the basis of morality by admitting to be true what he knew to be false. He pleaded for toleration of their weakness on the ground of charity, and not on the ground that they were right. They based their notions on the mistaken belief that an idol was something; Paul declares that he knows it to be "nothing in the world."

God never intended that one man's conscience should dominate another's, any more than he designed that one man's eyes should see for another man's eyes. Yet some assume the right to put

out the spirit eyes of a neighbor and do all his thinking for him in matters of rights and wrongs! Hence, the heresy of heresies is the claim of any priest or pope to dictate what men must believe in order to salvation, and in order to perpetuate spiritual slavery, to deny to the people the free use of the Bible—God’s gift to all his children. It is the essence of heathenism itself.

There was a “celebrated case” in which Paul vindicated the rights of God’s enfranchised children to live under the gospel and not under the law of “meats and drinks” and “new moons and holy days”—with human notions, maxims, customs of one sort and another piled up on the original law till no man could read it.

The Judaizing reactionary believers made a “point of conscience”—and with great and persistent outcry, as if they alone knew the mind of God—on “circumcising” the Gentile converts. Paul would not so much as listen to their demands, and to settle it forever with all such questions he took the case up to the Apostolic Church in Jerusalem. The result was a decree—are the apostles authority with the notion mongers dealing in home-made moralities of our time?—that began a new chapter in the history of religion and left circumcision where it belonged; among other rites,

ordinances, and ceremonials that, having served their end, now belonged to a time gone by and that had forever lost their use. The College also made some vigorous deliverances about a yoke which "neither they nor their fathers were able to bear."

Be it ever remembered: this intolerable "yoke" was not in the laws of God, given through his servant Moses, but in the multiplication of by-laws, small statutes, little conceits heaped upon the original laws by self-righteous Pharisees and narrow-minded, and therefore conceited, elders who, as Christ told them, "had made void the law through their traditions."

When men begin to manufacture virtues and vices there is no end to the process; they will at last make a mode of washing the sacred vessels, a cardinal doctrine, and rank the "tithing of anise and cummin" with keeping the Ten Commandments. Fortunate for the Church if they do not place a "Resolution" of some little "Convention" on a level with any "Thus saith the Lord."

These Pharisaic regulators of other people's conscience (such people are always Pharisaic; it is a temperament with some and a vice with others) had before our Lord came with the "truth"

that “ makes free ” well-nigh tormented religion to its death.

There can be no true religion without freedom of conscience. It is the curse of Romanism and of heathenism alike to force conformity with or without conscientious conviction. This spirit takes heads off when it is the fashion; if otherwise, as in our time, lays itself out to destroy the good name of him who cannot or will not say, “ Shibboleth.”

It is said that the Japanese have a trick of dwarfing the life of what would be a tree, if it had freedom of earth and air. Planted in pots, the poor, hungry roots twist about one another seeking outlet and food. The dwarf lives, after a fashion, for a time, but without beauty, use, or reproductive power.

There seems to be a fatal perversity with all who undertake the work of manufacturing on their own account a “ code of morals ” or constructing a system of casuistry for others. Now that mere “ legalism ” for religion is dead and gone, by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, they cannot be content to live under the gospel; they cannot reconstruct and enforce the law of ordinances, and they make a system of their own, and then consecrate their energies to forcing upon

others their own conceits. They are ever seeking to reënter a bondage from which Jesus Christ has delivered us—as mules will rush back into a burning stable from which they have been delivered; they are still camping in the wilderness that lay about Horeb. In vain for them has the apostle written: “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart; and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake); but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

Solemn as a voice from the judgment seat is

the apostolic injunction that follows this glorious declaration of soul freedom to the redeemed ones who love the Lord Jesus Christ: “*See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.*”

What St. Paul enjoined upon others he maintained in his own practice—never failing in the tolerance of strength and charity—yet never yielding his own right of conscience.

Speaking of fidelity to the Corinthians who were divided in a partisan way among themselves—not without bitter criticism, and fault-finding of the apostle himself who had given them all they had of the gospel—he says: “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment; . . . but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”

It cost much that Christians might be “made free by the truth,” “even the precious blood of the Son of God.” Let them “not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Than preserving this blood-bought liberty there is no duty more urgent, no right more sacred. And never since the heroic “apostle to the Gentiles” laid down his life in the maintenance of this gift of God—soul freedom in Christ Jesus—has the need of standing up for this divine right of



personal liberty been more exigent than in our times—when on every side of us men and women are clamoring to us to regulate our living by their consciences rather than our own.

. . . . .

As a principle for everyday observance, one of the best rules for honest-hearted Christians to avoid the confusing and perplexing casuistries that, through the ignorance of some and the perversity of others, disturbed the peace of the Churches in Rome and Corinth; questions like them, in insignificance and whimsicality, to this day scattering discord through the Church of God, as an envious neighbor might shake out seed from a Canada thistle over his neighbor's field, is a principle so obvious and simple that its importance will be naturally overlooked by those who prefer a complex theory of their own to the plain truth of the gospel: Attend with all our might to the fundamentals of religion; as to God, substituting his will for our own; as to man, living by the Golden Rule; and keeping out small disputes and mere side issues with conscientious purpose, tireless persistence, and unfailing charity.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### PROCRUSTES.

THE classical dictionaries tell of Procrustes as much as any human being living in the last years of the nineteenth century has need to know. Indeed, the Unabridged Webster on the table there has enough: "A celebrated highwayman of Attica, who tied his victims upon an iron bed, and, as the case required, either stretched out or cut off their legs to adapt them to its length."

The hobby of Procrustes was an iron bed. Perhaps he made it himself; at least thought it out. Therefore he doted on it as an old man on an only son. The chief concern of life to him centered on his precious bed; by it he had occupation and a certain keen though demonish delight. He stretched or shortened unhappy men who fell into his hands, not, as some have hastily assumed, for the sake of the bed itself, but for the joy he had in carrying out to the uttermost of life and death his notion about it. If we must have the truth, he had organized the universe about himself and not about the bed.

Perhaps he came, after a time, truly to revere

the bed. Was it not his own? Maybe what he called his conscience got entangled in his notions concerning his bed—that is, with such a man, his views of himself. We may assume that he and his bed made a fit, as the conch and the hard shell he has for house fit each other.

Fitting him, it should fit all; he was the ideal man. If any was foolish or wicked enough to grow into a misfit, he must die; such a man reflected on the inventor. If too short for that bed, he was not fit to live; if too long, he condemned the stature of the master himself and must die for his presumption.

Procrustes we have always with us. Always and everywhere he is the same, stretching or shortening men to fit his measure; sometimes shortening at the top, taking off heads when it is the mode of the time. When changing custom forbids slaughter and puts Inquisitions out of business, Procrustes, with ready invention, adopts other means. With tongue or pen—slander by open lying or secret innuendo—he will oppress and destroy those who do not think and feel as he.

The instinct of personal freedom, stronger in the sphere of religion than anywhere else, is God-given. In this right is conditioned a man's chance to be a man. Republican government is an evolu-

tion of this instinct, and because it is congenital and throbbing in every heart, "government of the people, for the people, and by the people" will yet sweep despotism of all sorts out of the world. God speed the day! And God will as fast as men are fit.

Throughout the ages and in every nation—the most degraded and the most enlightened—the human soul has had this instinct of freedom. It has been crushed down by hateful tyranny and brutal force till it gave no sign of life, except its low moan of agony made all the protest that could be made. That moan, sighed out of sore-wounded souls, is a prayer for help and a prophecy of deliverance.

Sacred as the right to live at all is the right of men to grow long or short; while, wronging no others, to think and feel, to speak and act, as suits the conscience that is in them. Better let men think wrong and do wrong than force them to "profess" what they do not believe. Greater wrong cannot be done a man than to force him, by compulsion of any sort, to lie. Persisting may come to martyrdom, and that is better than falsehood.

Wrongdoing that hurts another, society may punish even to putting the wrongdoer to death; but society never yet made men good by force of

any sort; of arms, or statutes, or force of public opinion. Virtue does not thrive under force. Under compulsion of any sort, sword force or force of censure, religion cannot exist.

There was never yet religion worth the name that did not hide in its innermost heart, as the inspiration and law of its life, *love*, which at its divinest consummation is self-sacrifice. That is what the agony and bloody sweat meant in Gethsemane under the olive trees; what the pangs that broke the Saviour's heart on the Roman cross signified to men.

Only he who, in his heart of love, has learned Christ's secret of self-sacrifice can wisely or safely exercise his right of personal liberty. He who knows not this holy secret will so use his right as to violate what is sacred to another. Then he is Procrustes himself.

He who asserts his heavenly right of personal liberty only so far as it is his in obedience to the royal law is doing what the Eternal Powers intended him to do. God is against all who forbid, oppose, or hinder him. It is better to be as poor as Jesus was and to have few friends (even he had some, mostly women, up to the cross itself) than to dishonor this blood-bought right of freedom of conscience.

There was never any cause more worth suffering, fighting, and dying for. To lose this right by surrender or seduction from the truth is to lose all. Without it soul growth is at an end. To dishonor this right is to dishonor and disappoint God.

God made man to grow Christlike. He gave him the "truth that makes free" that he might see the way and put conduct on his conscience that he might "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Otherwise man does not grow at all; he shrinks and withers into spiritual death.

To help men grow who live in their sacred rights of conscience, the Holy Ghost comes with regenerating, sanctifying power. To a liar—one agreeing to what he does not believe, or alleging what he knows to be false, or affirming what he does not know to be true—the Holy Ghost comes not, except to rebuke and warn to repentance; without which is damnation.

"The end of God's work in a man," says Dean Alford, "*is the man.*"

How simply, how heroically, the Nazarene peasant teacher exercised the right of freedom of conscience! There was no assertion of his right; he "did not cry in the streets;" he simply lived it. No power, no custom, no seductive influence of

majorities clamoring for the wrong thing, no tradition, no scornings, no slanders made him swerve one hair's breadth from what he believed to be the truth and right of things. Nor did the cross deter him. He died as a sacrifice for the race, but he was as truly a martyr as any saint burned to death, for love of him, in Rome.

And he never crossed the rights of the poorest, humblest, wickedest man who ever came about him. When he thought men wrong, and so hurting themselves and their fellows, he tried to teach them their error or to show them their sin. He showed what the truth was. He persuaded, entreated, taught, and warned; force he never used nor thought of using. Could Jesus have organized public opinion and concentrated its force on the lowest villain in Jerusalem, he would not have used it to constrain allegiance.

Only playing at religion—seeking a reputation for being godly—which is hypocrisy, he denounced; the lightning—fierce as that which played on Horeb's brow—of divine anger against falsehood and sham, flashing forth in his awful words. But he would not have forced even a hypocrite to pretend to a change of heart. He would not have forced the love of a dog, nor would he have trampled on his rights.

Only heretical and vicious religions—devil-inspired, all of them—use force. Forcing adherence, whether by thumbscrews, racks, fires, leg cutting, leg stretching, or the pressure of intolerant opinion, is not a venial error of the head; it is a cardinal sin of the heart; a mortal heresy more hurtful to Christ's kingdom than the attacks of all the Philistine host. He who would by any sort of torture, of flesh or spirit; by any sort of power, of arms or intolerant opinion, force his brother to think with him is an incarnate heresy—as truly as he who denies the Godhead of Jesus Christ. Heroes, martyrs, confessors—the best friends of God and best helpers of man—grew to their greatness in suffering for their sacred rights of conscience, and dying before they would lie.

But a man really made free by the truth and free in his conscience after the manner of Christ's freedom, will not breed confusion in the company to which he belongs. If he cannot think and act in harmony, so as to keep the peace, he will withdraw, although he may walk the way of life alone. There were many times when Christ walked alone, and his great soul was wounded by solitude when he had sore need of friends.

Procrustes means intolerance. It is ugly, hateful, most wicked wherever it shows itself; it is at



its worst in religion; deadly there as black frost to tender flowers.

. . . . .  
Nobler thought, diviner sentiment never yet found utterance than from the man who best understood and best expounded the Christ; great-souled, heroic, yet loving Paul, who lived and died in his heaven-bought rights of conscience: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."



